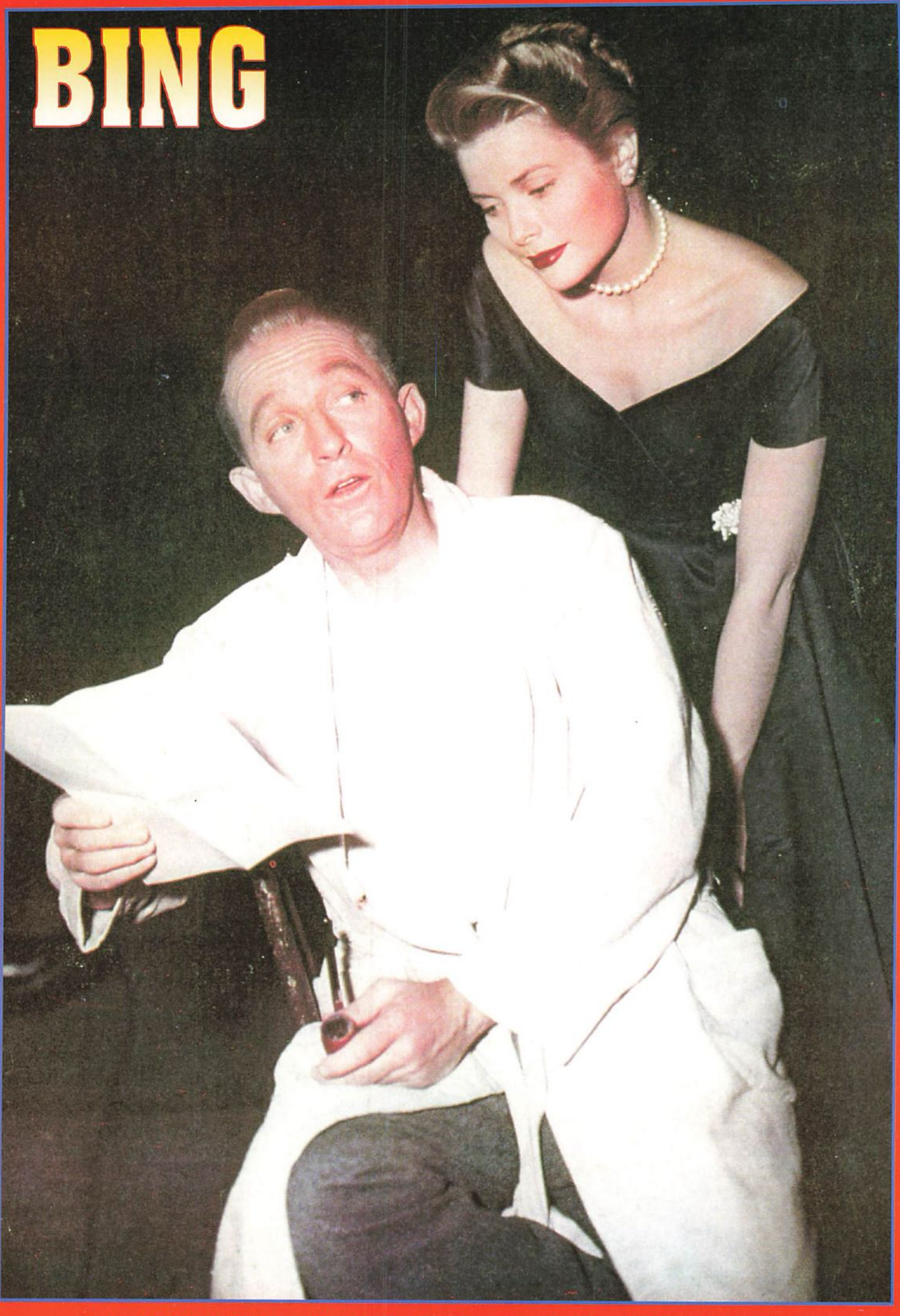
BING



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Bing Crosby's Christmas **ABM MCD1152** **UK**
Would you please note that ABM have asked me to apologise to our members as they had problems which prevented them releasing the above referenced CD last year. They tell me that they still hope that it will be released in time for next Christmas. We shall have to wait and see.

The Legendary Bing Crosby **Dressed To Kill METRO253**
I reviewed this CD in the last issue of BING but was unable to say where it could be purchased. I therefore wish to thank member Helen Rutherford for letting me know that it can be obtained from HMV stores.
Price: £2.49

Universal Legends **Universal MVCE 24086 (Japan) - 112 264-2 (UK)**
Both issues of this album are identical in content although the Japanese one was rather more expensive at about £20.00. I would like to thank member Miho Sasaji for kindly obtaining me a copy. The quality is very good and there are some interesting notes that even relate to "True Love" which was omitted from the titles I originally selected for this CD. *Running Time: 65:40*

Harry Lillis - Just What I Wanted **Limited Edition HLYCD 005**
Although I listed the contents I had not heard this particular album when I was writing my reviews for the winter issue of BING. I must also tell you that virtually all the copies of this very limited edition CD have now been sold. Apologies had to be sent out with the CDs as some damage had occurred to them during transit, although this did not affect the playing quality which is excellent. My sources confirm that this is most definitely the last of these non profit making albums. Running Time: 77:24

Please Note!
There seems to be some confusion about whether or not I sell compact discs and I would like to put the record straight. I think that this impression comes about because it used to say "CDs / Records" alongside my name on the inside front cover of BING (it should perhaps more correctly have read "CD Reviewer" and the Editor has kindly amended this for me now). I have helped out on odd occasions with the sales of special limited edition CDs but generally I do not sell or store CDs. I have also from time to time helped members get CDs that they have had difficulty in purchasing but do not want to do this as a matter of course.

Jim Reilly

Walk On By

In BING #124 we gave details of a forthcoming series about the history of popular music which was being prepared by the BBC for transmission in the Autumn of 2001. Your Editor supplied background information and suggested various contributors, including Gary Giddins. The series has now been completed and was shown earlier than planned on BBC2 commencing on March 17. Part one covered the influence of the Jewish and Negro cultures, Al Jolson and Irving Berlin and the next week it was straight into Bing.

The programme on March 24 opened with Bing and Louis singing "Now You Has Jazz" from High Society and we were quickly told how Crosby and jazz came together in the late twenties thanks to the influence of Louis Armstrong. Gary Giddins, Will Friedwald and Richard Sudhalter amongst others told the story and they sang Bing's praises very loudly indeed. Tony Bennett came in later and repeated what he had written in his book, something to the effect that Bing was bigger than Elvis, Paul McCartney and the Rolling Stones put together. We saw excerpts from the Mack Sennetts ("I Surrender Dear", "Just One More Chance" and "Auf Wiedersehn" were the songs) and also Bing's 1939 version of "Stardust" was played over scenes from the Sennetts. The programme also used extracts from the wartime short *Swingtime With The Stars* and we heard Bing singing "Don't Fence Me In".

Apart from Bing, we saw plenty of Satchmo too. Anita O'Day (only two minor chart hits in her entire career!) was interviewed and we gained the impression that she was very influential together with Billie Holiday and Ella. Kay Starr and Artie Shaw also made contributions and there was much rare archive footage. Over all, the programme was very well researched and put together. It provided an accurate view of Bing's influence on popular music and it finished by taking us into the Sinatra years. The review in the Daily Telegraph by James Walton was very enthusiastic and included the following:

The twin breakthroughs, we learned were the arrival in Chicago of a young trumpeter called Louis Armstrong and - more unexpectedly for me - Paul Whiteman's decision to hire one Bing Crosby as a permanent singer for his big band. Sadly, I'd only really known Bing before as the perpetrator of those terrible songs that dad makes us listen to on Christmas mornings. (Sorry dad.) In fact, he turns out to have been a musical innovator of some importance - the first modern pop singer, the first person to take full advantage of the electric microphone and one of the first people to suggest that Louis Armstrong could be a mainstream success. (It was also quite a surprise to hear that Bing used to hang out with Louis smoking pot.). . . . 'Walk On By' I've now decided, is not merely a series to relish - it's one to collect.

Very pleasing and yet more propaganda to help us put Bing back where he belongs.

The Best Of The War Years **Stardust Records CLP 07632** **USA**

1. Pennies From Heaven
2. Going My Way
3. Please
4. I'll Get By
5. It Could Happen To You
6. Soon
7. In The Land Of Beginning Again
8. Only Forever
9. There's A Small Hotel
10. My Heart And I
11. Too-Ra-Loo-Ra-Loo-Ral
12. With Every Breath I Take
13. Strange Music
14. These Foolish Things
15. Let's Take The Long Way Home
16. That Sly Old Gentleman
17. Down By The River
18. It's Easy To Remember
19. The One I Love Belongs To Somebody Else w Al Jolson
20. Swinging On A Star

Without doing a full check I am pretty certain that all the titles on this CD previously appeared on "Bing Crosby V Disc Recordings" Collector's Choice Cat. Number CGCCM35962. The sound quality appears good although I did not listen to it as thoroughly as usual. I am indebted to Wig Wiggins for sending me a copy of this nicely packaged CD which he found when visiting Tower Records. I am sorry that I did not have time to check whether this CD is available in the UK.
Running Time: 47:11. Price $9.99

Pennies From Heaven **Golden Options MCPS GO3837** **Sweden**

1. Too Marvellous For Words
2. I've Got A Pocketful Of Dreams
3. I'll Be Seeing You
4. You're Getting To Be A Habit With Me
5. Out Of Nowhere
6. Love In Bloom
7. Sweet Leilani
8. Swinging On A Star
9. I Love You (Porter)
10. Remember Me
11. Pennies From Heaven
12. Moonlight Becomes You
13. Sunday Monday Or Always
14. Don't Fence Me In
15. Sierra Sue
16. Trade Winds
17. San Fernando Valley
18. The Moon Got In My Eyes
19. You Must Have Been A Beautiful Baby
20. June In January
21. Dinah
22. Just One More Chance
23. Brother Can You Spare A Dime
24. Three Little Words
25. White Christmas

Nothing new on this album but it is nevertheless a pleasant enough CD and the sound quality is not bad. All titles have had plenty of previous exposure on compact disc. Running Time: 76:14. Price: £5.99

I'll Be Home For Christmas **Newsound Silver Bells 20352** **USA**

1. White Christmas, 2. Adeste Fideles, 3. Silver Bells, 4. Medley: Deck The Halls / Away In A Manger / O Little Town Of Bethlehem / The First Noel, 5. Silent Night, 6. Rudolph The Red-Nosed Reindeer, 7. God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen, 8. Sleigh Ride In July, 9. I'll Be Home For Christmas, 10. Faith Of Our Fathers, 11. Santa Claus Is Coming To Town, 12. Here Comes Santa Claus, 13. Happy Holiday, 14. Jingle Bells, 15. You're All I Want For Christmas, 16. The First Noel, 17. Twelve Days Of Christmas, 18. Let's Start The New Year Right

This is a nice Christmas album with nothing new to CD. It is an enjoyable collection of Bing's festive offerings that was released in 1999. I am never sure whether it is worth including Christmas albums so early in the year but you never know you might still come across it in the shops or see it around in the next festive season. This label is normally priced at about $3.99 or $4.99 but I can't say for certain as my copy was a gift.
Running Time: 53.38

UPDATE:
Classic Crosby 1926 -1934 (as shown in last issue BING)
This CD was released last year and from the information I had at the time I quoted the wrong title which should have been

Classic Crosby Vol. 1 **NAXOS Nostalgia 8.120507** **Germany**

1. Did You Ever See A Dream Walking
2. Please
3. Where The Blue Of The Night
4. Thanks
5. Sweet And Lovely
6. It Must Be True
7. How Deep Is The Ocean
8. Young And Healthy
9. I Surrender Dear
10. I Found A Million-Dollar Baby In A Five And Ten
11. A Ghost Of A Chance Cent Store
12. My Honey's Loving Arms
13. Temptation
14. Out Of Nowhere
15. Black Moonlight
16. I've Got The World On A String
17. Love In Bloom
18. Down The Old Ox Road

One glance at the titles will show that there is nothing new on this CD. It is nevertheless a very nice CD and I was impressed by the quality of the sound reproduction. Running Time: 57:26 Price: £4.99.

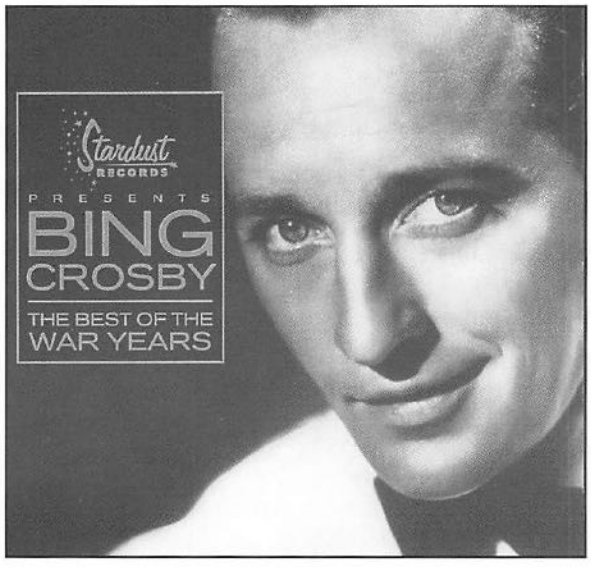
The Chronological Bing Crosby Volume 23 **Jonzo Records JZCD-23** **UK**
July 11 - December 2, 1938

1. I've Got A Pocketful Of Dreams
2. Don't Let The Moon Get Away
3. Silver On The Sage
4. Laugh And Call It Love
5. Mexicali Rose
6. You Must Have Been A Beautiful Baby (-A)
7. You Must Have Been A Beautiful Baby (-B)
8. You Must Have Been A Beautiful Baby (-C)
9. Old Folks (-A)
10. Old Folks (-B)
11. My Reverie (-A)
12. My Reverie (-B)
13. You're A Sweet Little Headache
14. I Have Eyes (-A)
15. I Have Eyes (-B)
16. The Funny Old Hills (-A)
17. The Funny Old Hills (-B)
18. Joobalai (-A)
19. Joobalai (-B)
20. When You're Away (-A)
21. When You're Away (-B)
22. Ah Sweet Mystery Of Life (-A)
23. Ah Sweet Mystery Of Life (-B)
24. Sweethearts (-A)
25. Sweethearts (-B)

I find it sad that some people are put off this wonderful series of albums due to the number of alternate takes and I must admit that this was my original gripe. On this CD we have no less than nine titles with alternate takes but it should also be noted that there are fifteen different titles and if you don't want to listen to all versions of a particular song you can use the programming button on your hi-fi. "Laugh And Call It Love" is new to CD as are the following alternate takes - "When You're Away" (-A), "You Must Have Been A Beautiful Baby" (-B & -C) and "My Reverie" (-B). I thoroughly recommend these Jonzo albums to all members with the facility to play CDs. The quality is excellent and we are at the stage when Bing was for many at his peak. Running Time: 72:32
Jonzo 22 and 23 are only obtainable in the UK and the rest of Europe from Jonzo Records, PO Box 212, Harrow Middlesex HA3 7LD. Price £10.70 each including pp. (or both for £21.10). Cheques to be made payable to Jonzo Records. USA and Canadian Members can obtain copies from Wig Wiggins (address inside front cover).

Bing Crosby & Company **Memoir CDMOR548** **UK**

1. Dinah w The Mills Brothers, 2. Mister Meadowlark w Johnny Mercer, 3. The Waiter The Porter and The Upstairs Maid w Mary Martin and Jack Teagarden, 4. Gypsy Love Song w Frances Langford, 5. The Whistler's Mother-In-Law w Muriel Lane, 6. Everywhere You Go w Evelyn Knight, 7. The Spaniard That Blighted My Life w Al Jolson, 8. Lullaby (Jocelyn) w Jascha Heifetz, 9. Once And For Always w Rhonda Fleming, 10. You've Got Me Where You Want Me w Judy Garland, 11. The Way You Look Tonight w Dixie Lee Crosby, 12. Basin Street Blues w Connie Boswell, 13. Bob White w Connie Boswell, 14. Busy Doing Nothing w William Bendix and Cedric Hardwicke, 15. Sunshine Cake w Carole Richards, 16. Sam's Song w Gary Crosby, 17. It's Been A Long Long Time, w Les Paul Trio, 18. Day By Day w Mel Torme And The Mel Tones, 19. (Get Your Kicks On) Route 66 w The Andrews Sisters, 20. Be-Bop Spoken Here w Patti Andrews, 21. Pennies From Heaven w Frances Langford and Louis Armstrong, 22. Oh 'Tis Sweet To Think w Ann Blyth, 23. I Still Suits Me w Lee Wiley, 24. A Couple Of Song And Dance Men w Fred Astaire
It is unusual to find an album in the shops these days with material new to CD but that's what we have here with one track "Be-Bop Spoken Here" (w Patti Andrews). The song is not my opinion one of Bing's best recordings but for the sake of completeness it is good to have it. There are some other rarities including "Everywhere You Go" (w Evelyn Knight), "Lullaby" - Jocelyn (w Jascha Heifetz - violin), "Once And For Always" (w Rhonda Fleming), "Busy Doing Nothing" (w William Bendix and Cedric Hardwicke) and "Oh 'Tis Sweet To Think" (w Ann Blyth). The mastering of "Busy Doing Nothing" is the best I have heard on CD and the sound quality of all the titles is very good. Running Time: 73:55. Price: £8.99



that Crosby was the first to realise that the microphone could be treated as, in effect, a musical instrument. As a singer with jazz groups and big bands, Crosby had had to belt the songs out in a high register to make himself heard. But he could nuzzle into a microphone and play it like a harmonica. This allowed him to become both a baritone and an actor, delivering songs quietly, intimately and even conversationally.

Tiring of the disciplines of a weekly live-to-air radio program, Crosby insisted on pre-recording. When refused permission by CBS, which saw live broadcasting as its life blood, he decamped to the struggling ABC - a place where, previously, stars wouldn't have been seen dead. He took with him a piece of German technology retrieved from the rubble of Berlin - a tape recorder.

It wasn't simply the leap in quality that would transform radio (and subsequently TV) but that you could dub. A recording no longer needed to be an all-at-once affair, going straight on to a shellac disc. It could be put together from component parts and made infinitely more complex and controllable, as could the effects employed in a variety show or drama. This led to the transformation of the music, film and TV industries, with Crosby making millions from his investment in the Ampex Corp.

On a personal level, the documentary takes us from his Jesuit education to the show-business pinnacles, taking in his Oscar-winning career as an actor and his marriages, one fairly catastrophic and the other calm and successful. It paints a portrait of a bloke who seems decent and well-intended, and whose considerable talents gave him a career that went up, up and up. What an elegant, swelegant party it was.

Phillip Adams,

(Bing goes the sound system. The Australian, December 23, 2000, page 21)

(Editor: Slowly the message is sinking in thanks to documentaries like this and to Gary Giddins' book. Let's keep communicating with those of the younger generation who are unaware of Bing's achievements)

Keeping Track

A Compact Disc Review by Jim Reilly

Unfortunately just when I was working on these reviews I had the misfortune of having to go into hospital at short notice. I am indebted to the hospital for allowing me home for a short time thus enabling me finalise these notes before sending them to our esteemed editor. That will teach me to work on them earlier in future! Traditionally we don't always get too many new releases at this time of year, so we are fortunate to have six new CDs for me to report on in this time around.

The Chronological Bing Crosby Volume 22 January 26 - July 8, 1938 **Jonzo Records JZCD-22** **UK**

1. Alexander's Ragtime Band (-A) w C Boswell
2. Alexander's Ragtime Band (-B) w C Boswell
3. Home On The Range / True Confessions (-A)
4. Home On The Range / True Confessions (-B)
5. Sweet Hawaiian Chimes
6. Little Angel
7. Let Me Whisper I Love You ("Murmullo")
8. Don't Be That Way
9. Little Lady Make Believe
10. When Mother Nature Sings Her Lullaby
11. Darling Nellie Gray
12. Swing Low Sweet Chariot
13. I've Got A Pocketful Of Dreams (Reject)
14. Now It Can Be Told
15. It's The Dreamer In Me
16. Don't Let The Moon Get Away (Reject)
17. Small Fry (-A)
18. Small Fry (-B)
19. Mr Gallagher And Mr Shean (-A)
20. Mr Gallagher And Mr Shean (-B)
21. Summertime (-A)
22. Summertime (-B)
23. A Blues Serenade (-A)
24. A Blues Serenade (-B)

All the tracks are from 1938 a year when Bing was most prolific and in fine voice. "It's The Dreamer In Me", the B take of "Summertime" and the reject tracks make their debuts to CD. "Little Angel" has, to my knowledge, only appeared on an expensive Japanese double CD. "Let Me Whisper I Love You", "Little Lady Make Believe", "When Mother Nature Sings Her Lullaby" and "Darling Nellie Gray" have not had many outings on CD. For those who might not know "True Confessions" is sung by Connie Boswell and both versions of "Alexander's Ragtime Band" are introduced by Eddie Cantor. The sound quality is again excellent and I am definitely pleased to add this album to my collection. *Running Time: 72:44*

That track was played for Ron Leach who had complained to Barnsey that there was not only too much Ella and Sinatra on the wireless, but even their selections were the same old songs. There's hundreds of Bing records we've never heard on the BBC said the aggrieved Ron. "Road To Hong Kong" might have gone someway to redressing the balance as would have been "Be-bop Spoken Here" - at least they're very rarely heard though hardly an obvious choice. More obvious, though, were three Bing and Connee tracks played in remembrance of what would have been her 89th. birthday. Describing the calendar pages on the first of each month, as always, Barnsey chose "Anything Goes" as the theme for the new millennium from the ten film posters displayed on the January page, and he was quick to point out that Bing is one of the very people ever to have starred in both an original and a remake of the same film. Offhand I can't think of any others, though character actors and stars taking a lesser role by way of a nod to their original performance is not uncommon, as with Robert Mitchum and Gregory Peck in the remake of Cape Fear. But, here again, we have Mr. Crosby proving that two decades were no barrier to his leading man status. A situation which came as no surprise to Bingophiles everywhere!

Bert Bishop

When Radio Was

The syndicated radio series, "When Radio Was" hosted by Stan Freeburg featured Bing's December 24, 1947 Philco Radio Time Christmas show on Wednesday December 6. This syndicated series is heard in all 50 states in the USA. Also, WNIB radio (FM 97) in Chicago has a great series each Saturday afternoon from 1-5pm CST called "Those Were the Days", featuring old radio shows and nostalgia. They've recently begun broadcasting via the internet at www.wnib.com

On Saturday December 23, the first radio show to air at 1pm CST on "TWTD" was Bing's December 21, 1949 Chesterfield Christmas show with guest Ethel Barrymore. Then on January 6, Command Performance #122 (June 29, 1944) was broadcast, with guests Bing, Bob Hope, Frank Sinatra, and Judy Garland.

Mainly Bing

This is the three hour late-night show presented by Ron Field in New South Wales, Australia on Edge FM 93.7 on the first and third Fridays of each month. Ron's format is to play two early Bing songs followed by one late Bing song and he is doing this in chronological and reverse chronological order. He then plays two records by other artists before returning to his Crosby format. Sounds like an intriguing combination. Ron obtained some useful publicity for his programme in his local paper in January.

BING'S JINGLE STILL RINGS

This was the headline in *The Australian* newspaper at Christmas and an article by Mark Butler followed which was mainly a review of a forthcoming TV programme, 'Bing Crosby, the Voice of the Century', originally shown as the South Bank Show in the UK in December, 1999.

The article posed two questions: is it possible to have Christmas without Bing, and is 'White Christmas' all there is to Bing? The answer to the first question was a resounding 'no' which is fair enough but disappointingly Mr. Butler concludes "that without 'White Christmas', Crosby would just be another forgotten white-bread crooner." Breathtaking, isn't it and it certainly caused our member John Stoner of Christies Beach in South Australia to draw breath.

John fired off a detailed letter to the journalist setting out some of the facts of Bing's achievements and I particularly liked this paragraph

> I am unaware of the amount of research that was carried out to produce your article but your opinion of the programme and your own comments regarding Bing Crosby, would suggest that whatever research was carried out was extremely superficial and certainly not based on your own personal experience, as I would suspect that you are far too young in years to be aware of the influence that Bing Crosby had on the public in general during his career of 51 years from 1926 to 1977.

John went on to explain some of the facts of the entertainment world of the twentieth century to Mr. Butler very successfully. To date no reply has been received but well done, John, for 'having a go.' He is an excellent example to us all.

Another article about the programme (which was shown on December 24) in *The Australian* of December 23 by Phillip Adams was more balanced:

> According to this Melvyn Bragg effort, the most influential person in 20th-century mass media wasn't an inventor or a tycoon. He was a crooner. We're told that no individual came within cooee of the dominance of *Bing* Crosby. If this proposition sounds wildly hyperbolic (and, by the program's end, it tends to remain so), the bragging claims of Bragg and co have some substance. It's not just that Crosby dominated US popular culture - and therefore much of the world's- between the 1930s and the mid 50s. It's not just because his version of Irving Berlin's White Christmas holds the sales record of 40 million. Or that his 21 platinum singles over 20 years overwhelmed the sales of every contender, from Frank Sinatra to Elvis Presley. Neither is it that his box-office dominance made him a bigger Hollywood star than Clark Gable, John Wayne and Jimmy Stewart combined. It wasn't that during his career he recorded more than 2000 songs.
>
> No, the claims made for his influence, for his dominance, are based on issues of style and technology. The claim is made that Crosby, under the influence of his friend Louis Armstrong, introduced jazz timing and scat to whitefella singing, to the mainstream of American pop. This places Crosby at least a decade ahead of his time. Then comes the suggestion, supported by the likes of Sinatra, that Crosby invented an entirely new mode of singing that allowed for unprecedented intimacy and subtlety, and that every singer since Bing's heyday has been in his debt.
>
> This brings us to the issue of technology: that Crosby's style was made possible by the existence and increasing sensitivity of the microphone. It turns out

But, having settled for 'Where' by playing the Old Groaner's 1945 version, Mr. Jackson went on to say that with Bing you get all sorts of different styles - 'he was a much talented singer, as we know from his many films.' - and to prove the point next played the Crosby - Durante duet of "Sing Soft, Sing Sweet, Sing Gentle" on which both participants burlesque the entire 'Old Blue' composition. Again a variation from the norm by featuring the version of "True Love" that has Miss Clooney stepping into the Kelly clogs, thereby confusing many a GMR listener more familiar with the regular sailboat serenade I imagine. Now that we have him on the team, members in that area should keep Gerald in Crosby mode with their requests and comments. No stranger to Manx Radio is Judith Ley who after playing "Remember Me" was to say 'We can never forget him. He had a natural talent and never took a singing lesson in his life!' And later; following "So do I", 'Bing sang every imaginable kind of music and he always gives us great pleasure - for thirty years he was radio! From that very medium came quite a chunk of the very first Philco Radio Time courtesy of Frank Wappatt. The humorous exchanges between Bing and Bob Hope are a good example of some of the better radio banter in which they frequently engaged..

AND THE RAINS CAME

The *String Of Pearls* programme, delightfully hosted by devotee Christine Prentice, continues to feature a wide spectrum of Der Bingle's music and she is always so praiseworthy of his performances on record: 'He never lost his voice and would still be singing if he were alive today.' At aged ninety-eight that might be something of an exaggeration, but it's a nice sentiment. Christine was one of several that recognised, musically, the incredible amount of water that has descended upon us all from a great height in the last few months. An autumnal mini "Indian Summer" was soon to be followed by "Walk Me By The River" and "Where The River Shannon Flows" on her show, also GMR based. Many other rather damp titles spring to mind, of course: "High Water" might be the most appropriate, though "I Left My Sugar Standing In The Rain" could well be the theme tune of those unfortunate folk forced to abandon their culinary quarters for the relatively drier rooms upstairs. Even Frank Wappatt got in on the act with "Cool Water", and Barnsey was also in there with Bing's and another's version of "Stormy Weather", 'just can't get my poor self together; keeps rainin' all the time.' There is also a Bing and Rosie CD collection on which she sings "Luverly Weather For Ducks" !!! But enough of this watery whimsy, let's go straight to Barnsey's other presentation of "Stormy Weather". A CD from the States, courtesy of Ernest Sutkowski, has reached a few presenters on which a certain Charlie Polloi is wholly featured. Never heard of him? No, neither had I. Paul also played "I've Got to Sing A Torch Song" back to back with Bing's version from this album. However, this singer, who accompanies himself on the guitar and whose real name at this time is unknown, was also heard on Russell Davies' programme with a very creditable rendition of "Young And Healthy" in a remarkably Crosbyesque style and sound. No one in the ICC would be fooled into thinking it was Bing, but it was quite fascinating to hear, especially as he included the verse, which I'd never heard before. Almost certainly the pseudonym 'Polloi' is taken from the expression 'hoi polloi' from the Greek 'the multitude', and there were, especially in the 'Thirties, a multitude of of aspiring sound-a-likes stepping up to the microphones anxious to imitate the Crosby style. Young Charlie is one of the better ones. Anybody out there able to add to the story?

THINGS THAT GO BUMP

One of them is the famous Phil Harris song, "The Thing", performed here by his old mate Bing on a Chesterfield Show from January 1951 where he was joined in a humorous parody by Fred Astaire, and now recently resurrected by Eddie Murphy on his Sounds Nice, Shannonside programme. New to us in the last edition of the magazine we are pleased to report that Eddie is keeping up his Crosby Corner with some nice variation. One of the other great Crosby Corners is Desmond Carrington's each Sunday and on the occasion of playing the nightmarish "Headless Horseman" wondered what had happened to Ichabod, the film. Well, Des, read this magazine! MGM haven't bumped him off I can assure you. The Jimmy Kennedy classic "Red Sails In The Sunset" is a special favourite from that great period in Bing's career, and with "Mr. Meadowlark" and the much later "Chicago" included in his one-a-week (at least) selections Desmond has been doing Bing proud as usual.

Nothing bumpy about Harmony Night down there in the Garden Of England where Mr. and Mrs. Rennells take you smoothly through three hours of nigh on non-stop melody. Bing is the most requested, and it's nice to note familiar names among the dedications proving how worthwhile these representations can be to the Crosby cause.

Heard with great pleasure have been "Missouri Waltz" from Kraft Music Hall; "I'm Making Believe" (with humurous introductory dialogue) also Kraft; "Empty Saddles", and "The Banjo's Back In Town", which is just a tiny proportion of their listeners' very varied selections. There are no bumpy landings from Barnsey, either. Piloting his programme with the same skill as he pursues his amateur flying he continues to take off each week end on his musical journey across the airwaves of East Anglia. Sadly, Essex has been axed from his Saturday show but we still get to hear the Sunday programme, and through the good offices of Stan White the Crosby content of the 'loneliest night of the week' parachutes on to the Maylandsea mud flats whence it is eagerly retrieved by yours truly not only for my pleasure but also for inclusion in this column.

A track from one of those 2 LPs on one CD re-issues featuring Rosemary Clooney turned up on Gold For Grown Ups. "Clap Hands Here Comes Rosie" and "Fancy Meeting You Here" are the albums in question (well worth getting!) and Paul played the title track of the latter on which Bing has probably fluffed his line:

Bing: 'Say, tell me something. How did you ever lose that wealthy, er that big fat Persian?'
Rosie: 'Twasn't easy'.
Bing: 'Fancy meeting you here.'
Rosie: 'Did you take that African excursion?'
Bing: 'I blew it!'

continue, to be heard in most retail establishments. Similarly, and not surprisingly, it is still the most frequently heard Crosby recording on the wireless at that time of year. But it is increasingly apparent that several presenters are looking for variations on the theme. Throughout his professional life Bing sang that song about a hundred times including five times for commercial release, so there is plenty of scope for alternatives to the old 1947 warhorse. As an example it appears in four different guises on the Decca CD The Voice Of Christmas from which Paul Barnes, showing real initiative, opted for the 1942 'genuine original' DLA 3009-B during a short treatise on Spike Jones, the 'engine room' expert with John Scott Trotter at that time! Bill and Angela Rennells also played this version, but our 'less chat, more music' duo made no mention of this instantly recognisable waxing destined to be retired from service in favour of its later offspring. Chris Robinson chipped in with the pre-release, film trailer soundtrack version for *Holiday Inn*, complete with commentator, on which Bing duets with Martha Mears dubbing for Marjorie Reynolds; its first time on the wireless he opined. Also heard, from various sources, were the track from the album "A Christmas Sing With Bing Around The World", soundtrack from the 1954 film of the same name with its all-star line up of Danny Kaye, Peggy Lee and Trudy Stevens, and one of my favourite alternatives, Bing and Ella from the Christmas 1953 General Electric Company broadcast. So, Irving Berlin's perennial favourite continues to entertain under the mantle of its many Crosby manifestations and, just occasionally, others'.

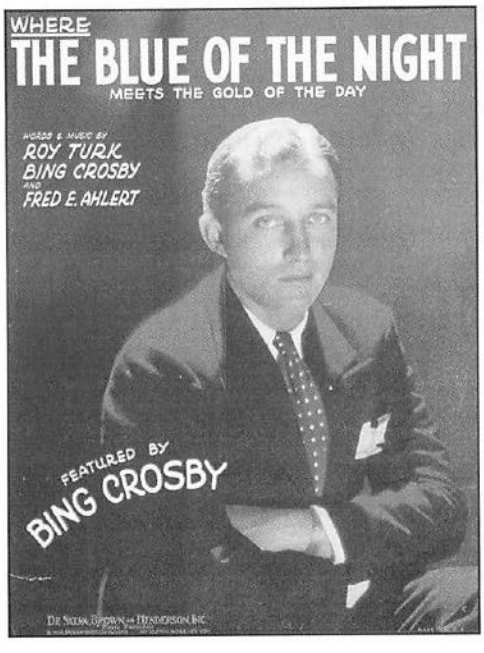
Anne Hopper also gave the 'white one' a whirl on her Christmas Eve programme; just one of four Bing tracks in her ninety minute stint that afternoon. She also featured "Auld Lang Syne" and "Let's Start The New Year Right" the following Sunday and, indeed, the latter track was heard every day in her week's preview run up to the turn of the century. Unfortunately, I'm not now receiving a cassette from that region, but via Maggie Ryan, Anne has kindly sent typed notes of what Crosby tracks she plays, such as "True Love" for Grace Kelly's birthday and the philosophically romantic ballad, "The Second Time Around". Without the connecting and complimentary dialogue as heard, though, the write-ups of Anne's programmes will be sadly diminished.

One of the best from South & West is still our old friend Chris Croz Quiz, as I call him; as he frequently uses Bing tracks as a musical clue to his Mystery Year. Apart from the previously mentioned soundtrack, five further seasonal songs figured on his Sunday Late Show, including two versions of "Silent Night" one of which was from radio. The 1947 release airing prompted Chris to relate the origin of this most famous Christmas carol. Penned by Joseph Mohr on Christmas Eve 1818 as a last minute emergency when the church organ broke down (mice?), friend Franz Gruber hastily wrote the music in time for a choral with guitar accompaniment presentation for the Midnight Service in their Austrian village. Its endurance and popularity remain a tribute to their eleventh hour collaboration.

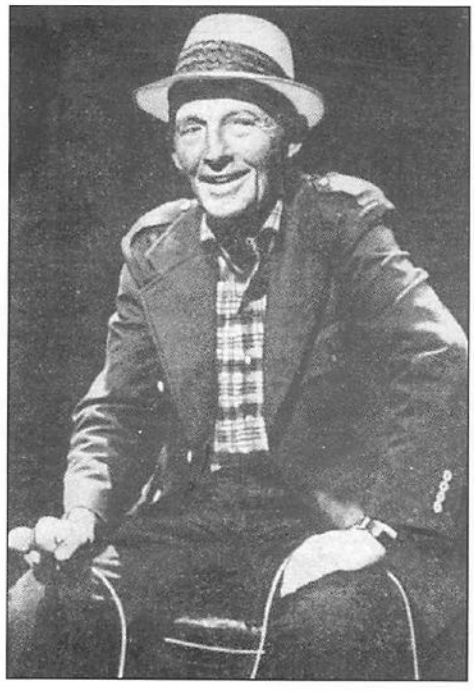
Desmond Carrington was well in the frame for the most Christmas Crosby featuring no less than four Bings on his Christmas Eve broadcast. Starting the show with "Christmas Is" and concluding with "A Time To be Jolly", the lively "Here Comes Santa Claus" added to the wint'ry scene of "Snow" up there in his Scottish hideaway. That presenters don't always recognise the Crosby voice can be illustrated by Trevor Fry, who though correctly crediting "Happy Holiday", thought that "We Wish You The Merriest" was all Sinatra! But that's a rare slip up I fancy for most presenters will acknowledge that when it comes December the Glen Moore - Seger Ellis song , "You're All I Want For Christmas", says it all when electing Crosby as their choice of Christmas crooners.

WELCOME STRANGER

Climb aboard, Gerald Jackson of Greater Manchester Radio, a new to us presenter who, after many years, has at last discovered the correct title of Bing's signature tune. Is it 'Where' or is it 'When' the blue of the night meets the gold of the day'? I shouldn't worry too much, Gerald; even Bing was quite happy to sing either as listeners to his radio programmes will know.



supposed to be a family show; so what about something for the grannies?' said narrator James Theakeston introducing the Bing clip. On came Pete Waterman, a record producer, saying 'I can't even remember what act I was doing, but I walked in and there was Bing Crosby! And when I looked in at the dressing room, and met him - it was fantastic - he was a real gentleman. You were in the presence of someone who was bigger than anybody could be in the room.'



Bing makes his debut on Top Of The Pops

The Director at the time was Robin Nash and, while Bing was performing his musical statement of a life well run, he takes up the story. 'I was directing that programme myself and I suddenly looked up and thought, I know that face, and it was Edward Heath. He had heard that Bing Crosby was appearing on TOTP and he particularly asked to come down to the studios.' Film of the ex-Prime Minister arriving followed as Johnny Pearson, the Musical Director, joined in: 'I felt a tap on the shoulder and it was Edward Heath, and he said'; 'Do you think you could get Bing Crosby's autograph for me?' Robin Nash, with some amusement, came back to say: 'I seem to remember Bing wouldn't go back to the dressing room after the rehearsal because he was very interested in Pan's People.' Cue a final shot of Bing saying 'Go, girls, go!' as close ups of shapely, brief covered bottoms hove into view, bringing to an eye-popping conclusion a very satisfying tribute!

ALIAS MR. CHRISTMAS

Needless to say the wireless has produced a crop of Yuletide Crosby for one of the four intervening months. But first, as predicted in the last issue of this magazine, our Derbyshire duo, Neil Robinson and Arthur Blood, have been back flying the flag on two occasions on Radio Derby. The 20th. October had them guesting on Frances Fin's show, who was hosting in the absence of Paul Mackenzie. Not having been subject to their enthusiasm before, nor indeed, knowing barely a thing about him, Frances started at grass roots by asking what was it about Bing that did for them. Almost as one their response was his unique voice and personality, and that during his time became the very fabric of their lives. On this occasion the theme was the story of Bing's film career. Whilst it was the film *Holiday Inn* that had them both hooked, their reminiscences went back much further. As in the re-telling of the glued back ears period in those halcyon Hollywood days when Marion Davies would have a 5-piece band playing on the set of *Going Hollywood* and, in the process, earned Bing a fortune by this, and similar, delaying extravagances. "Beautiful Girl" was the musical catalyst here, and was later followed by a couple of other 'Thirties classics, including "Pennies From Heaven", with which to illustrate their biographical narrative. One notable anecdote concerned Leo Lynn with whom Bing went to school and who was to become not only his driver but also his body double during the making of his movies.

On their fourth visit to the broadcasting studio, 20th. December, Paul was back in the chair and, still unable to resist his crooning interjections, expressed great surprise at the 62 tracks which Neil and Arthur had reckoned were Bing's tally of Christmas recordings. Arthur had brought along a CD which featured four numbers they had selected, and of such quality that Paul asked if he had a studio. The half hour or so was soon under way with "It's Beginning To Look A Lot Like Christmas" around which were weaved interesting facts revealed in such a way as to come across as three fellas just having a cordial chat about the man and his seasonal music. Two 'phone-ins worthy of repetition here came, firstly, from a gentleman who was seeking a Crosby recording entitled "Bump On The Head Brown". It can only be assumed that he was referring to "Kinda Peculiar Brown" from the film 'Dixie' - or that he was the one who had suffered a cranial collision! Secondly, there came a call from a lady who fondly remembers Bing singing "The Shell Song" on BBC2 way back when. Surely, this could only have been a commercial TV station advertising feature! And still further illustrating the need to 'educate' the later generations about Bing, Neil told of the time that he went to collect three 78s he'd bought from a woman in Derby. The lady had left them with her neighbour who expressed great surprise that there were actually as many as three Crosby 78s. She thought he had only ever recorded "White Christmas"!

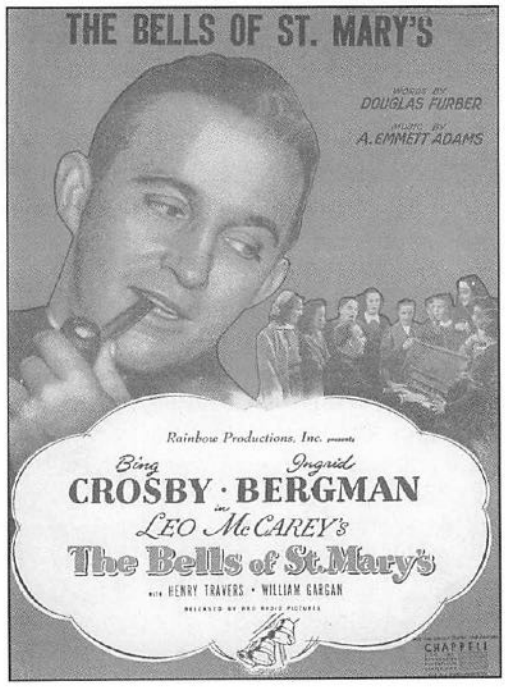
Two more tracks from Arthur's CD, concluding with "Christmas Is Here To Stay", helped to enlighten Paul Mackenzie's audience of the reason for Bing's sobriquet that heads this part of the proceedings, following which the Likely Lads informed them that he was also known as Uncle Sam Without Whiskers, and that when he died the then former President, Gerald Ford, said 'Christmas will never be the same again.' All in all two more excellent promotions for the Crosby cause from the Derby - Burton boys, who are almost certainly scheduled to re-appear in person before you read this column. I like their free and easy style, and so spontaneously knowledgeable. Nice work, fellas!

JINGLE TILLS

Over the merry ring of the December money-go-round, now silenced for another eight months or so, the enduring sound of "White Christmas" continued, and will

CHROMATIC CROSBY

Of the Christmas clutch *The Bells Of St. Mary's* was by far the most interesting as it was shown in colour! (The BBC2 February offering being b/w.) This was brought to my attention by Stan Woodford, who very kindly sent me a copy as I do not receive the terrestrial, digital Carlton channel. It was transmitted on Christmas Eve at 4.45 p.m. and, as far as I am aware, represents a landmark in Crosby movies on television.



The colour version dates from 1987 and was ColorImaged™ by American Film Technologies the same company, presumably, responsible for similar visual enhancement of such as *It's A Wonderful Life* - available over the counter. Purists do not always agree with this treatment, believing that tonal qualities should not be interfered with. I would say that this applies more to film-noir thrillers and high drama where atmosphere, deliberately crafted by the director, is an essential part of the screen-play. However, with this type of film, and with Father O'Malley and all the nuns attired in black and white anyway, the transformation was not so great. Though the good Father's yellow straw boater did add a splash of colour! But all in all, with brownstone buildings and mainly sombre interiors, there was no hint of garishness and I believe it to be an acceptable, visual augmentation.

As usual, Bing strolled through the picture dispensing wise words and pastoral homilies; though Leo McCarey gave Ingrid Bergman's Sister Benedict the most philosophical line: 'If we don't fail sometimes our successes won't mean anything.' As with *Going My Way* no romantic ballads, of course, but Burke and Van Heusen came up with another of their idealistic numbers on which to ponder: "Aren't You Glad You're You?" The title song was, and still, is a visual and aural treat indelibly etched in the minds of Crosbyphiles everywhere and invariably pops up in biographical programmes chronicling the Crosby career. A satisfying sequel to *Going My Way* with acting honours equally divided between the starring principles and enjoyed all the more by its colour enhancement.

The mention there of biographies, and such, brings us to a programme change of considerable disappointment. The Ondigital TV magazine led us to believe that on the 23rd. December, at 9 p.m., a musical programme entitled 'Legends Of Entertainment: Bing Crosby' was to be screened. Indeed, the magazine's Pick Of The Week and Sidelines features gave photo enhanced prominence to this programme. How many tuned in and set their VCR's only to be greeted by Judy Garland with Messrs. Sinatra and Martin in support? They were scheduled for the following Wednesday. Right, we thought. A programme switch. Bing will be on then. But, no; a repeat of Saturday's broadcast ensued. What was going on? Again we turn to Stan Woodford for the answer. Our, understandably, irate member from Hornchurch both wrote and telephoned the Granada people. It's a long story in which he was passed from one department to another only to discover, finally, that the programme procurers were outbid for the Crosby show and that it was all too late to advise the publicity departments. The only very small consolation is that of the Legends series (still ongoing) Bing's was the one that another channel was the most keen to acquire. But who? We may never know.

However, Carlton Cinema screened a mini biography of Bing. Lasting fourteen minutes, and slotted between films, the programme began with a short clip from Mack Sennett's *Blue Of The Night* and was introduced as being one of the great success stories of the 20th. Century. Dating from 1993, it was narrated by Larry Robinson and was clearly edited from a longer broadcast as characters (and songs) were credited who did not appear. There were contributions from, among others, Gary Giddins, Jack Lemmon and A. C. Lyles, who was a producer at Paramount Studios. He was to repeat the frequently told story that the joint Crosby/Hope stage performances led to the idea of casting them together in a film. Though the two may not necessarily be linked we know that the first choices for the original Road film concept were Fred MacMurray and Jack Oakie.

As this brief biography was shown on a movie channel it was appropriate that most of it was devoted to Bing's film career. 'Movie critics and film historians have never given him his full due. Crosby was the first popular singer to win the Academy Award', stated the narrator of Cress Darwin's script; who, with Del Jack was joint producer. But it was biographer Gary Giddins who was to close the programme with a comment on Bing's final two years. 'He remained a sublime entertainer right up to the end.' Though very brief, the profile was an affectionate glimpse of the man considered to be America's greatest entertainer. Should not that read 'the World's'?

HE'S THE TOTPS

On the 1st. January BBC1's own *Top Of The Pops* celebrated an Anniversary with an hour long look back over nearly forty years of musical performances that most of us would prefer to forget. But, thanks to Bill Wesley, who had the foresight to record this, we can all share the moments from 26 year ago when Bing, surrounded by unusually subdued teeny-boppers, performed his chart hit, "That's What Life Is all About". *Top Of The Pops* was

pianist who 'accompanies' Bing on the song 'I Couldn't Care Less'. Younger film fans will remember him from *Popeye* (1980) and *Fast Times at Ridgemont High* (1982) as well as a cameo appearance in the film version of *My Favorite Martian* in 1999.

Dale Evans, the widow of Roy Rogers, died in February at the age of 88. Born Frances Octavia Smith in Uvalde, Texas, she eloped with her high school sweetheart at the age of 14. A year later, she was living in Memphis, Tenn., a single parent, and began pursuing a career in music. She assumed the name of Dale Evans in 1940 and became a singer on a weekly CBS radio show "News and Rhythm." In 1942, Dale landed a Hollywood contract and had small parts in *Orchestra Wives* and *Girl Trouble*. More films followed, including *In Old Oklahoma* in 1943, a John Wayne film in which her singing was featured, and *The Cowboy and The Senorita* (1944), the first of 28 films she made with Roy Rogers.

Dale Evans married Roy Rogers on New Year's Eve in 1947 at the Flying L Ranch in Davis, Oklahoma where they had just completed filming *Home in Oklahoma*. They went on to develop their own production company in 1950 and began producing their half-hour television series, "The Roy Rogers Show," which ran until 1957. Dale co-wrote "Happy Trails," (which became their theme) and also the 1955 gospel music standard "The Bible Tells Me So." Roy Rogers died in July 1998 at the age of 86.

Dale appeared with Bing on the Kraft Music Hall of January 20, 1944 when she sang a duet with Bing of "The Surrey With The Fringe On Top."

George T. Simon, Author and musician, also died in February at the age of 88. In 1937, while working as a writer for Metronome magazine, he sat in with the fledgling Glenn Miller Band and played the drums as the band recorded its first half-dozen songs. But he opted to stay in writing, and became Metronome's editor in chief in 1939. He held the job for the 16 years, championing artists from Frank Sinatra to Ella Fitzgerald to Peggy Lee. As a writer, he worked for the New York Post and the now-defunct New York Herald-Tribune. He also wrote several books on the swing era: "The Sinatra Report" in 1965, "The Big Bands" in 1968, and "Glenn Miller and His Orchestra" in 1974. In 1977, Simon won a Grammy Award for best album liner notes - his contribution to the collection "Bing Crosby: A Legendary Performer." Simon was apparently hand-picked by Bing to write the liner notes.

Bert Bishop's
BING ON THE BOX

Another Christmas been and gone, and another New Year. Only this time we really are in the 21st Century and a new millennium. Of course, by the time you read this column all that is history. But since much of what appears in this magazine relates to historical events that shouldn't concern us here, even though the Spring has sprung and every man's fancy turns to thoughts of Catherine Zeta-Jones (or maybe Russell Crowe if you are of the, ahem, opposite gender).

You may recall that in the last issue of the magazine a further reference to *The Adventures Of Ichabod And Mr. Toad* was promised. Recorded from the Disney Channel on Sky just before 'going to press' there was no time to comment in that issue. For me this was the first time I'd seen the complete double bill since its UK release in 1949 - 50 and I was delighted that it has finally come to light on TV. Yes, so we've had the commercial release of *Ichabod* for some time now but the two really do tie in together as there is linking dialogue spoken by Bing which is absent from the released version. Not much, but significantly important for the completists among us. Apart from which Eric Blore as Mr. Toad is just perfect. With Basil Rathbone as the narrator and the other *Wind In The Willows* characters as British as they come - a George Formby horse no less! - the first half of this excellent Walt Disney creation is an enjoyable companion to *The Legend Of Sleepy Hollow* which follows. Bing's narrative interpretation of the Ichabod Crane character just keeps the cartoon this side of the macabre (Have you seen the new *Sleepy Hollow* - weird!?) yet manages to be quite spooky and scary enough to have the kids hiding behind the sofa during the final denouement. The musical content features a trio of tuneful songs and as Ichabod, the singing tutor, Bing sends up both himself and Sinatra. Meanwhile, the coquettish Katrina, as one would expect, conforms to the Disney studio's depiction of nubile femininity and has the entire male population of Sleepy Hollow in a permanent state of doting delirium bordering on the totally ga-ga. I'm sure the double bill will be on again some time. Catch it if you can.

With the film *White Christmas* notably absent, the season's movies were fairly predicable. Nine over the Christmas period - some being shown two or three times - but not, sadly, if your receiving equipment has earthbound or analogue limitations.

Shown on satellite, or terrestrial digital, were *Roads to Utopia* and *Zanzibar*, *The Greatest Show On Earth*, *High Society, High Time, Robin And The 7 Hoods, Pennies From Heaven, Holiday Inn* and *The Bells Of St. Mary's.* Through January were *Going My Way* and *Riding High*, with further screenings of the Road pics and the updated Sherwood forest romp featuring The Clan, of which Bing was pleased to consider himself an Honorary Member. "D'you guys live like this all the time?!!", he once asked.

The only two terrestrial analogue screenings were in late January and mid February when BBC2 offered us *Blue Skies* and *The Bells Of St. Mary's.* The pleasure of the first was tempered by the repeated Radio Times critique that lauded Fred Astaire's performance at the expense of Bing. Considering Crosby's contribution as clumsy. We all know that Bing dances 'from the waist up' (his own words), but surely some acknowledgment of his principle attribute would have been appropriate.

ONCE IN A WHILE

The section of the magazine covering the obituaries of those connected with Bing.

Victor Borge was lost to us in December at the age of 91 following heart failure. He was born Boerge Rosenbaum in Copenhagen, Denmark and from early childhood he excelled at the piano. He made a living as a concert pianist until 1934 when he discovered that he could increase his income by making people laugh as part of a piano based act at the variety halls. He and his American wife left for the United States when the Nazis invaded Denmark in 1940. Having changed his name to Victor Borge, he made early radio appearances with Rudy Vallee until he was signed on a five year contract for Bing's Kraft Music Hall show. His first appearance with Bing was on December 4, 1941 and he was a regular on the show until November 1942. With his 'phonetic punctuation' and other routines, he was refreshingly different and he went on to present his one-man show for over 50 years including a run of 849 performances on Broadway, which is still the record for such a show. He teamed up with Bing again on the Hollywood Palace shows of October 31, 1967 and March 1, 1969.

Steve Allen - died on October 30 at the age of 78. Writer, broadcaster, multi-talented, Steve had a varied career introducing the forerunner of *The Tonight Show* in 1953 and enjoying many years of success on TV with *The Steve Allen Show*. He starred as Benny Goodman in the aptly named 1956 film *The Benny Goodman Story* and also wrote many songs. His connections with Bing are limited to the compilation film *Down Memory Lane* (1949) when he wrote the script and on-screen linked several of Bing's Mack Sennett comedies and to a Bob Hope TV show transmitted on February 27, 1962 when he and Bing plus Jack Paar appeared in a short sketch together.

Les Brown was 88 when he died on January 4. A clarinettist, he formed his own 12-piece band in the late 1930s and they enjoyed some success with their record 'Make With The Kisses' in December, 1939. When they played at the New York World's Fair in 1940 they were joined by the 17 year old Doris Day as vocalist for a while. Their recording of 'Joltin' Joe DiMaggio' is regarded as their first real hit and this was popular in October 1941 with Betty Bonney taking vocal honours. Doris Day returned to the Band in 1943 and participated in the band's biggest successes 'Sentimental Journey' and 'My Dreams Are Getting Better All The Time', both of which were No. 1 hits in 1945. Many of the large touring bands foundered after the war but Les Brown and His Band of Renown (as it had become known in 1942) kept together, due in part to Bob Hope who employed them permanently on his radio show. They followed him into television and also participated in many of his overseas tours to entertain the troops. The band had another chart topping record in 1948 with 'I've Got My Love To Keep Me Warm' which is widely regarded as the last great instrumental hit of the Big Band Era. Bing first recorded with Les in 1954 ('She is the Sunshine of Virginia' and 'All She'd Say Was "Umh-Hum"') and later they made the 'A Time To Be Jolly' album in 1970/71. Les Brown also furnished musical support to Bing on his TV appearances, not only on the Bob Hope Show but also on several of the Dean Martin shows.

Les Brown and Bing discuss a song at their recording session on June 21, 1954

Jimmie Davis, former Governor of Louisiana passed way in November. He was 101. The 'Singing Governor' as he was known wrote more than 400 songs and made many records. Jimmie enjoyed a brief film career, always making sure that his work as Governor did not interfere with his show business activities. Among the songs he wrote are "You Are My Sunshine", "Nobody's Darlin' But Mine" and "It Makes No Difference Now", all of which were recorded by Bing.

Milt Hinton, the jazz bassist died at the age of 90 in December. Starting in 1936, he had a fifteen year stint with Cab Calloway before working as a studio musician in the New York area. He formed part of Joe Bushkin's quartet during Bing's 1977 tour of the UK and Bing can be heard introducing him as part of the 'Now You Has Jazz' number heard that year and reproduced on the long playing album 'Joe Bushkin Celebrates 100 Years of Recorded Sound'. During his career, he performed with practically every great song stylist from Louis Armstrong to Paul McCartney.

Gwen Verdon, the singing and dancing star of many Broadway musicals succumbed in October at the age of 75. Famous for her role as 'Lola' in the musical *Damn Yankees* in 1955-56), she also starred as 'Charity' in *Sweet Charity* and as Roxie Hart in *Chicago* (1975). Married to Bob Fosse for some time, they collaborated on many musicals. Gwen also made film appearances, most notably in the film version of *Damn Yankees* (1958) but also in films as diverse as *David and Bathsheba* (1951) and *Cocoon* (1985). She appeared with Bing on the Hollywood Palace show of October 11, 1969.

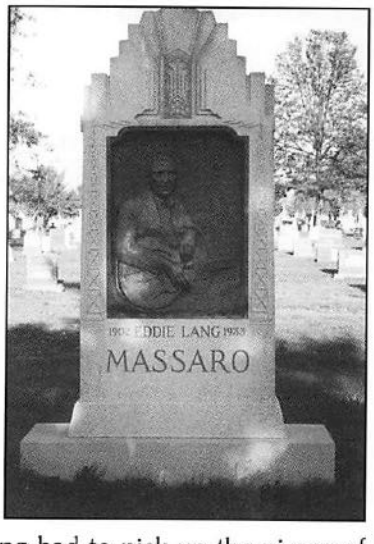
Ray Walston passed away on New Year's Day at the age of 86. He made a career of playing charismatic, cranky characters and like Gwen Verdon, he came to prominence in the Broadway musical *Damn Yankees* in 1955 when he played the devil. Film roles in *South Pacific, Damn Yankees* and *Paint Your Wagon* to name but a few followed and he also played the loveable extraterrestrial Uncle Martin on the 1960's TV sitcom 'My Favorite Martian'. He appeared with Bing in the 1959 film *Say One For Me* when he played 'Phil Stanley', an alcoholic

on Eddie to be his musical right arm. Lang selflessly volunteered to accompany Crosby on his radio audition at CBS for the Cremo Cigar Company. Bing never forgot Eddie's loyalty. He took him on the road for theater dates. When Crosby made the big time in the movies with "The Big Broadcast", there was Lang silently accompanying him. Bing didn't want Eddie to be silent any longer. He desired wider fame for his shy friend.

Eddie was self-conscious about his raspy voice so Bing convinced him to have his tonsils out. A simple operation even in those days. Then, Eddie could have a speaking part in his next feature film. Sometimes the best of intentions can lead to tragic consequences.

Kitty Lang will never forget that Sunday, March 23, 1933. Foreboding gripped her as she went to the hospital room after the operation. Eddie seemed to be sleeping quietly. But something was wrong. He wasn't waking up. Doctors and nurses scurried around. Kitty sensed the emergency and let out a scream. She was sedated and taken from the room. When she returned, she was greeted by long faces with half-hearted explanations for why her husband would never wake up. They suggested an autopsy, she refused. "They've cut him up enough," she said.

Now the arduous task was to tell the world that this kind, gentle and talented man had been taken so quickly. No one took it harder than Bing. He was told to rush to the hospital. When he entered the room he saw Kitty. "He's gone Bing," she explained. Bing fell to the floor with his head in her lap. "Kitty, I've lost the best friend I ever had," he sobbed. The music community rallied around her. Eddie's family and friends in Philadelphia were shocked. Sadly, at his funeral some "mourners" were more interested in getting a glimpse of Bing than paying their respects to his guitarist. Eddie was laid to rest in Holy Cross Cemetery where an impressive gravestone, so unlike the man, marks his final resting place. To this day, fellow guitarists from around the world come to pay him their respects.



Kitty Lang had to pick up the pieces of her life. Bing Crosby would go on to the pinnacle of stardom, but he didn't forget his old friend or his widow. In fact, Kitty had become very close to Bing's wife Dixie. The two show biz "widows" would comfort each other when their husbands were at work. Bing persuaded Kitty to pull up stakes and move to California where she bought a house around the corner from the Crosby's.

She became even closer to Dixie when Mrs. Crosby began to have children. Kitty was best friend, nursemaid, nanny and baby sitter. First came Gary, then the twins Phillip and Dennis. Bing honored the memory of his late friend by giving Phil the middle name of "Lang." Little Lindsay completed the Crosby quartet and Mrs. Lang became Aunt Kitty.

She remembers a different Dixie Lee than the one dimensional portrait of her that Crosby biographers paint. Not a sad, lonely figure who took to alcohol to ease the disappointment of a stunted career, but a loving loyal friend and warm generous person who had to deal with stresses most of us will never know. Yes, she did give up her career, but still made a few recordings, films (with Kitty as stand-in) and radio appearances. And did she ever love the horses! Dixie had a delightful sense of humor that only those privileged to be in her circle knew.

The Crosby marriage was certainly no fairy tale. Media superstardom was a new thing in the 30's and it's doubtful even Bing realized how all-consuming his career would become. Through all their ups and downs Kitty was there for Bing and Dixie. Eventually the strain took its toll on Dixie. She developed terminal cancer and Kitty was with her till the end. It was she who dressed Dixie's body for burial. For the second time, Bing sobbed in her arms as someone so near and dear to them both died too soon.

Kitty Lang knows many intimate details about the Crosby's which she will take to her grave. Some things are too personal for strangers who wouldn't understand. But Kitty will attest to her last breath that Bing and Dixie truly loved each other. As she will always love that quiet little guitarist who spoke to the world with his fingers, Eddie Lang.

[The authors would like to thank Kitty Lang Good and her son Tim for graciously providing information that appears in her biographical manuscript, "Still a Ziegfeld Girl". They reside in Nevada.]

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Even The North Koreans Had Good Taste In Singers

Goronwy Owen from Anglesey sent us the following relevant excerpt from a book titled 'British Forces In Korea' and Chapter 4 describes the defensive battles on a hill feature called The Hook.

> There were of course many nights when things were quiet and almost peaceful. The enemy would broadcast from loudspeakers with messages promising freedom from the Yankee yoke for those who surrendered, interspersed with the latest Bing Crosby records. Packets of tea, with a white china peace-dove pinned on top and enclosing a message to "Have a good cup of char and forget the hellish war" would be left for our patrols to find.

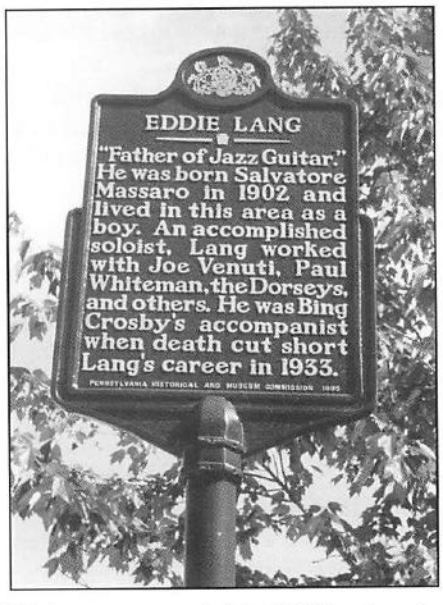
Isn't it amazing where Bing turns up! I wonder just how many records he sold in various parts of the world.

FLO'S KICKER, THE PICKER, THE GROANER AND THE SPOKES

by Tony Toran and Anthony DiFlorio III

Stardom is the result of many factors which are joined and ultimately mesh together. The wheel of chance often controls daily occurrences. It is comprised of many spokes representing the different personalities which control its balance. The wheel rotates and moves ahead by means of its axle, which is destiny itself. All are intertwined, as they were in the success story of Bing Crosby. Bing's talent was the mitigating factor and force in his rise to superstardom; the other spokes all helped in opening up the path for him.

The spokes consisted of two women with contrasting personalities - the very shy Dixie Lee (Wilma Wyatt), Bing's wife and the effervescent, outgoing ex-Ziegfeld dancer, Kitty Lang (Kathleen Rasch), Eddie Lang's wife. Dixie was a movie starlet (who sang and danced) under contract to Fox Studios when she married Bing. At the time of their marriage in September, 1930, he was still part of the Rhythm Boys, which was a featured act of the Gus Arnheim Orchestra. When Bing went out on his own in 1931, she traveled with him.


EDDIE LANG
"Father of Jazz Guitar." He was born Salvatore Massaro in 1902 and lived in this area as a boy. An accomplished soloist, Lang worked with Joe Venuti, Paul Whiteman, the Dorseys, and others. He was Bing Crosby's accompanist when death cut short Lang's career in 1933.

Kitty and Eddie were married in 1926 when he returned from London engagements with Red McKenzie and Miff Mole. In 1927, Eddie and his collaborator and co-creative musical pioneer, Joe Venuti, had joined the Paul Whiteman Orchestra. At this time, The Rhythm Boys were part of the Whiteman Organization. Kitty, Eddie and Bing got to know each other rather well. Later, after her marriage to Bing, Dixie and the group became a foursome. The other part of destiny's direction came about in the form of another guitarist, Perry Botkin. When Eddie was in New York (1930-31) engaged in a most successful career as a radio and recording studio sideman, Perry Botkin was also pursuing the same path. If Lang was the #1 choice for a program or session, then Botkin was #2, often filling in for Eddie if he was unavailable. Later, after the death of Eddie Lang, once Bing's grief over the death of his pal was healed by time, Perry Botkin moved his family to California and for the next twenty-five years served as the guitarist for THE GROANER. He and Kitty became good friends. In still another strange twist of fate, when Eddie was working with Bing (1931-33) Perry was working with Russ Columbo. During the initial buildup of their careers on rival radio networks, Bing Crosby and Russ Columbo became opponent's in the original "Battle of the Baritones." Both needed each other at this time to ignite fan interest.

All great singers, whether or not they are educated in all the formal and technical aspects of music, have one thing in common. They have an innate sensitivity concerning the quality of the accompaniment of the music surrounding them; it is the recognition of the musicians who form the framework upon which the singer relies and, in turn, is both comfortable with and spurred on to the next interpretative level. It enables the singer to put the audience at ease and then to surprise it with some unique and unexpected twist.

There are accompanists who, themselves, are creative geniuses. One, in particular, played a major role in the work of Bing Crosby. His name was Eddie Lang (born Salvatore Massaro); Lang was a stage name he adopted. Eddie and his boyhood & lifelong pal, Joe Venuti, were responsible for the use of the guitar and violin, respectively, in the venues of popular and jazz music. Before Lang, popular orchestras used the banjo as a rhythm instrument, either playing chords or melody. Lang, as a child, started playing violin and then switched to banjo, which also meant a knowledge of the mandolin and guitar.

In the early to mid nineteen twenties, the advent of the microphone and speakers for amplification led Eddie to switch to guitar. He understood the use of the microphone to propel and enhance the sound of his acoustic guitar. Lang had a good knowledge of the classical repertoire and was captivated by the work of Andres Segovia. Eddie developed the use of the guitar as an artistic solo AND accompanying instrument. He pioneered solid moving bass lines and also moving arpeggios intertwined with vertical block chords, which were often syncopated, to interpret modern selections; he also managed to weave into the arrangement some creative obbligatos which enhanced the song and at the same time gave the singer an aura of singing an aria.

What Eddie Lang was to the guitar, his friend Joe Venuti was to the violin. These two South Philadelphians revolutionized the world of music. And both were intimately involved with the career of Bing Crosby. What isn't widely known, however, is how close Eddie's wife (later widow) Kitty was to the Crosby family. Now in her late 90's Kitty Lang Good vividly remembers her extraordinary life and career.

Not just a Ziegfeld Girl, Kitty Lang would often sing with her husband's group as part of the act that played the Atlantic City Hotels in the mid 20's. Kitty rehearsed with the band and would sit up at night with Eddie as he worked out his guitar solos. She was one of the first bandsingers. This was even before Eddie and Joe had met Bing. But soon, everyone was talking about the exciting new singer Bing Crosby.

After leaving Whiteman, Bing would come to depend

that unique style. Kapp had to make Decca pay, and musically he knew how to do that. Others included The Andrews Sisters, Dick Haymes, Ella Fitzgerald, Russ Morgan and his Orchestra, Carmen Miranda, The Mills Brothers (who also left Brunswick with Kapp to join Decca), Louis Jordan, Danny Kaye, Al Jolson, Billie Holliday, Woody Herman, the list goes on and on with hundreds more.

So really, Jack Kapp was a remarkable man, who built up a great record company, and guided many many artistes to success as recording stars, there was Mary Martin, and lots of jazz related people such as Louis Armstrong, Earl Hines, Bud Freeman, Bob Crosby, Connee Boswell, and indeed The Boswell Sisters until they broke up.

As I said myself in the last edition, Bing's studio sessions for Decca often fell below the radio performances of the same songs, the Trotter Orchestra would be trimmed to a minimum of personnel etc., but Kapp was running a record company and had to keep an eye on the pennies, he could not spend the type of money which radio could afford in its heady years. Yes, we can be critical when just looking at Bing. In reality, it is true to say that Jack Kapp tried to do his best for all of his artistes, which was sometimes difficult, like Bing getting grumpy when Kapp first teamed him with The Andrews Sisters, but surely Jack was proved to be right.
(Editor: The subject of 'political correctness' is a sensitive one and I judge that the USA is more advanced in observing politically correct attitudes that we are in the UK. However as far as BING magazine is concerned, and without being silly about it, we shall do our utmost to consider the feelings of all types of person and, of course, in this regard, Bing set us a good example as Robert Achorn and now Gary Giddins have pointed out. One thing I don't agree with though is re-writing history. Whether we like it or not, certain things, like 'blackface', did happen and have undoubtedly helped to shape attitudes today.

Returning to the Jack Kapp debate, I can only agree with much of what Stan has said but what a pity that Jack didn't have Bing record the following when they were new songs instead of some of the others:
Smoke Gets In Your Eyes (1934)
Let's Fall In Love (1934)
Stay As Sweet As You Are (1934)
You're The Top (1934)
I Only Have Eyes For You (1934)
When I Grow Too Old To Dream (1935)
I'm In The Mood For Love (1935)
You Are My Lucky Star (1935)
East of the Sun (1935)
Lullaby of Broadway (1935)
Isle of Capri (1935)
The Glory of Love (1936)
These Foolish Things (1936)
There's a Small Hotel (1936)
Once in a While (1937)
That Old Feeling (1937)
September in the Rain (1937)
Marie (1937)
Where or When (1937)
They Can't Take That Away From Me (1937)
Begin the Beguine (1938)
Thanks For the Memory (1938)
Change Partners (1938)
Two Sleepy People (1938)
Whistle While You Work (1938)
Over The Rainbow (1939)
Penny Serenade (1939)
I Get Along Without You Very Well (1939)
South of the Border (1940)
The Breeze and I (1940)
When You Wish Upon a Star (1940)
Blueberry Hill (1940)
Fools Rush In (1940)
All the Things You Are (1940)
My Prayer (1940)
and so on. It's wonderful to have a degree in hindsight! Doesn't that list make you drool? Imagine a Jonzo CD with most of them on it!)

Peter Burgis, PO Box 1660, Port Macquarie, NSW 2444, Australia

....Can I pose a question? Can anyone provide a biography of Chick Bullock in a future issue? During the 1930s he was a strong rival of Bing, but as far as I can determine very little has been written about him. I'm curious!
(Editor: Well, I must show my ignorance again as I had never heard of Chick Bullock. Reference to Joel Whitburn's Pop Memories 1890 - 1954 book indicated that Chick Bullock and his Orchestra had four popular songs as follows:
1930 'Lazy Lou'siana Moon' (which reached #20 in the charts)
1932 'Underneath the Harlem Moon' (#18)
1933 '(When It's) Darkness On The Delta (#19)
1935 'Lullaby of Broadway' (#19)

But that's all I know. I contacted Bob Achorn about Bullock and this is what he had to say:
"I have only the vaguest memory of a deep voice and easy style - slightly reminiscent of Billy Eckstine but less stiff, less sophisticated, less mannered. Brian Rust's 1978 book, Jazz Records, 1897-1942, calls Bullock 'one of the most prolific of all American recording artists during the years 1930 to 1942.' - Rust lists 326 records under Bullock's name in 13 years. Not all are jazz, however defined. There is a wide representation of Crosby-type material . . . All of this work apparently was done for ARC-Brunswick and associated labels.- It's obvious that from Rust's partial list that Bullock was 'covering' many of the pop hits of the day for ARC - particularly Crosby's, but other songs as well.")

John Byrd, Hackney, London

In the 'And Here's Bing' book on pages 124 and 293 the same picture is shewn, but with different names of the woman with Bing. The first caption is Trudy Erwin, the second Anna Maria Alberghetti.

Could the next issue of BING say who is who? And what happened to Eugenie Baird?

(Editor: Well spotted, John. A few errors crept in at the last moment with the photos and the lady on page 124 is indeed Trudy Erwin. The Anna Maria Alberghetti photo was inadvertently not included in the book. The picture on page 193 is not Bing on the broadcast of 'Sing You Sinners' but instead is a repeat of the photo on page 73. Our apologies for these slip-ups. As for Eugenie Baird, we know that she had a couple of minor hits after she left the Kraft Music Hall and these were 'I Fall In Love Too Easily' in October 1945 with Mel Torme's Mel-Tones and 'Say Si Si' in 1953. Other than that, we don't see to know much about her and anyone who can supply information will be welcome.

Now here's a name from the past...)

Ted Laker, 36 Villiers Rd., Southsea, Hants, PO5 2HQ

Many thanks for the latest magazine. My how the year has flown, and the 50th. anniversary of the Crosby Circle. The club started in a small way, but even then gathered members into an ever-widening organisation, with much enthusiasm and hard work, as some of the original team have indicated in your magazine.

...Anyway you've certainly arrived at a magazine that you can all be proud of, full of interest, and even a controversial topic or two, I don't for the life of me see what the criticism around Jack Kapp of Decca Records is about. As if you read the information properly regarding him, you will find that he wasn't responsible for the titles Bing recorded. He may well have made some suggestions, but Mr. Kapp's real claim to fame is that he steered Bing into areas of song that he may not have moved into quite so easily. Giving the Crosby voice a wide range - everything from jazz, popular standards, country, and of course carols and hymns - now how many other singers have that range, you'd be hard put to find anyone. So let's sing the praises of Mr. Kapp who realised early on, if you want staying power you need variety, and the Crosby career, certainly proved his point.

We've been lucky down here, to have the talents of Jim Reilly on 'Angel Radio' as mentioned in the magazine doing a four part series on Bing, and what an interesting series it was, with much reaction so I'm told from listeners. Your reviewer sounded a bit over critical, with his mention of 'clinical' and reading his script, to me the programmes sounded quite natural, with a goodly mixture of the well known, and the sometimes almost unknown. I have an idea that big Jim will be invited back for more shows, I sincerely hope so anyway.

(Editor: Thanks, Ted, I'm sure Jim will very much appreciate your kind words. Reverting to the Jack Kapp subject, I rather think that Jack did pick Bing's songs for records whilst Bing picked those he sang on radio. However, another to pick up on the gentle criticism of Mr. Kapp was Stan White)

Stan White, 57 Stanley St., Rothwell, Kettering, Northamptonshire NN14 6EA

Concerning Robert Achorn's "Bing and Black Performers", it is worth mentioning that in the days of Music Hall and Variety Theatre, we had a number of blackface artistes in this country, G. H. Chirgwin (The White Eyed Kaffir); Eugene Stratton (the first to perform the song 'Lily of Laguna'); G. H. Elliott (The Chocolate Coloured Coon). Elliott was very famous and followed in the footsteps of Eugene Stratton. George Formby put on the burnt cork in his film "The TT Races"; most will remember George Mitchell's Black and White Minstrels in post World War Two Television and in the Theatre, a great show which ended because of this so called demeaning of blacks - as if such as George Formby would do that, it was just Theatre. To this very day, Clive Baldwin still does his Jolson act on both side of the Atlantic, and still works in blackface if the audience do not object after being asked.

Now I wonder how much a success American Decca would have been, had it been Clive Menadue in charge instead of Jack Kapp? Seriously, although Bing and Victor Young had worked with Jack Kapp, from 1931 in the case of Bing when they were all with American Brunswick, it has to be understood that when Kapp obtained the rights from Edward Lewis of English Decca, to launch Decca in America, it was by no means an easy task for him to take on. In fact if such as Victor Young and Bing had not agreed to support him by leaving Brunswick for Decca, Jack might not have been able to proceed with the venture, especially in the case of Victor Young, who could do anything from being a recording engineer to arranging and conducting an orchestra. Bing was a friend of both, his records were selling well on Brunswick, so along with some others, it was essential for Jack to take some established recording artistes with him.

I would not argue about Clive and Malcolm making the point that Kapp did miss out on giving Bing any number of great songs to record, especially in the 1930s. However, before the thirties were out, American Decca had hundreds of artistes recording for the label, and most of them remained with Decca for many years, and Jack Kapp also guided the recording careers of those artistes, often giving them the songs to record which Clive laments Kapp not giving to Bing.

Kapp had a business to run, and he did it well, and rather like Ray Noble for Al Bowlly for HMV in this country, Bowlly was often given second rate songs to record because Noble knew that the combination of his own band with Bowlly on vocals would sell - regardless of the song, Noble gave the better songs to other artistes who would need a top notch song to help the sales. Kapp obviously did the same with Bing, not always of course, as we all know.

One thing is certain, Bing's million sellers for Decca soon faded away after the death of Jack Kapp in 1949. As I say, Decca had hundreds of singers and bands In their catalogue, and Kapp was criticized for his way with some of them for instance when he stopped recording The Ink Spots as a swinging little jazzy group and slowed them down to the famous guitar introduction for such songs as, "Bless You" and "Whispering Grass", their jazzy type recordings never sold like the slow ballads done in

singing voice. I had some CDs and I listened often to the radio but I didn't find anything that I thought was appropriate. Then I remembered that I had a Bing Crosby Christmas album that I didn't really listen to because up until that time my favorite Christmas album was by Johnny Mathis for sentimental reasons. Once I listened to Bing, I was hooked. My next CD was either the Bing & the Andrews Sisters collection or one of his Irish albums. Since then I haven't been able to get enough. It's funny, when I go to the record store I make a beeline to the Easy Listening section hoping to find a new Bing CD.

I have a funny story about Frank Sinatra. My parents only listened to a Christian radio station while I was growing up. I didn't have my own radio until I was almost a senior in high school so I never heard much of the popular music of the day or of the past. I was watching an old movie called *Von Ryan's Express* one day and I thought the actor was pretty good. A little while later I got ahold of a book which listed the films of this actor Frank Sinatra and I was amazed to find he sang too!

It must have been wonderful hearing Bing on the radio live and seeing him go into TV as well as watching his movies at the theatres. I know what it's like when real life gets in the way of our passion. I'm glad the London Palladium concert set you back on the right track. Opening night must have been incredible!

I've been in constant contact with a gentleman by the name of Harold Sunners. He has an incredible collection of Bing's records and knows just about everything there is to know about Bing. He has been wonderful in his generosity and kindness.

I live in a small town called Oley in Pennsylvania but I originally hail from Long Island, NY. I'm glad you might be able to use some of the pictures I sent you. I really do love to share Bing. I think it's the type of spirit he would encourage.

(Editor: Nice one, Carol! I just had to share the next letter with you too. It was sent to Michael Crampton and it also made me laugh!)

Clive Menadue, 5 Helig Fan, Kenfig Hill, Bridgend, CF33 6BT

I might have known! Having just spent the evening busking in the wind and rain I arrive home to find this annual demand for money from you. It's not as if I made £10. My "Blue of the Night" went down like a Greek tanker and my "June in January" brought ribald cries of "Get the cough medicine!"

Anyway, who is this Bung Crisby and why should I support him and at the same time fund Malcolm's twice yearly holidays spent swanning around the USA? And now Lionel Pairpoint has joined the merry throng. Why keep messing around? Why not put an advert in BING magazine telling anyone who feels like a jaunt to America to write to me personally so that we can cut out the middle man?

I don't know why I left the Andy Devine vocal appreciation society to join this mob; I'm broke all the time and it looks like another Christmas spent fighting the garden birds for bits of bread crusts. Last year you promised me that Mohammed Fayed would send goodies to my door but they never came. He told me he was too busy arranging free accommodation at various luxury hotels in the States for Malcolm and Lionel!

"It's the rich what gets the pleasure, it's the poor what gets the blame" as the old song says. Anyway. Keep up the good work and have a merry Christmas and a very happy new year. (Preferably in this country!)

(Editor: This year it's Florida and Canada, Clive! You only live once, we'll sell the house if necessary! [Only joking!])

John Martin, 'Oaklands', Hall Walk, Easington Village, County Durham SR8 3BS

Our last few BING issues seem to be over concerned with polls and articles about Crosby being "forgotten", "underrated" etc. I don't think we should pay too much attention to so called experts who weren't even born when Bing was at his peak in the 30s and 40s. Our new member Tom Bertino of the USA has hit the nail right on the head in his letter stating that Bing's art was deceptively simple and direct. So simple and easy in fact that it seems to have completely eluded the 'experts' who have not noticed that nobody in the past or the present has come anywhere near his popularity and commercial success in the cinema or approached for example his unique ability to sing romantic songs to countless females from Joan Bennett to Carole Lombard to Dorothy Lamour to Grace Kelly in such an appealing and attractive manner. Dubious opinion polls don't mean a thing. The real test of popular music lies in the pleasure given to millions over the years and in this respect Bing did all he could do in his own era.

So why is Bing often dismissed or ignored? Almost certainly the answer lies in his perceived image (outside the Crosby Circle) of being a genial amiable middle-aged 'Mr. White Christmas' from the 1950s, in other words the huge commercial success of 'White Christmas' has completely overshadowed all the rest of his incomparable achievements. Maybe that is the way Bing wanted to be remembered as he pursued the image relentlessly until the day he died, but it was at the considerable cost of undermining his huge contribution to popular music. Not just my opinion. Ask anybody under the age of 50 or note the comments in various film books or even the Millennium Edition of Collins English Dictionary i.e. "Famous for his style of crooning - now remembered for 'White Christmas'.

We in the Crosby Circle know much better of course but we must do much more than preach to the converted and do our best to ensure that the public at large are made aware of the man who started it all and who stood head and shoulders above everybody for so many years.

I myself became a Crosby fan in 1946, attracted like so many by the voice, the phrasing and the relaxed easy going persona. Now my favourite period is from the 1930s, an area which is somewhat neglected, but which to my mind demonstrates his ability to tackle any song, however rangy. Where the purity of his tone in the upper and lower ranges was so beautiful.

(Editor: Well, I can only agree with what John has said and in fact I'll go further. To many young people, Bing is the old man in that David Bowie video! Gary Giddins' book will help as will the Hofstra seminar but it is up to us all do our bit to tell people about Bing's achievements.)

One Sweet Letter From You

Members' views, opinions and comments are always welcomed and we have great pleasure in reproducing some of the letters received since the last issue

Rod Poynter, Sydney, Australia.

While casually perusing an article, "How the net will change our children" (Sun Herald, Australia - 8/10/2000) Bing's name suddenly caught my eye. What has Bing to do with the Internet, I wondered. The article went on to detail a study into the effects of the net, being conducted by Murdoch University, Western Australian. Professor John Richardson predicts that the youth of the future could be easily colonised by dominant cultures, such as the US. "It's important we don't get hooked into the syndrome we've been in with radio and television," he said. "When radio first came on the scene, people were worried about its effects, about exposure to crooners such as Bing Crosby."

That was a new one on me. The perceived evils of 'Rock And Roll' in the '50's; the ritual burning of records - such occurrences are well documented. But the mind-bending effects of exposure to crooners may warrant further investigation!

(Editor: Yes, it's true that Bing's music was considered to be an undesirable influence on the young at one time and it's perhaps something we should remember when our children or grandchildren listen to 'music' which is alien to our ears. Every generation has to have its own heroes after all! Gary Giddins' new book (page 202) gives details of Boston's Cardinal O'Connell denouncing crooning as a force for evil and inviting his parishioners to share his "sensation of revolting disgust at a man whining a degenerate song, which is unworthy of any American man." When appearing in St. Louis in 1932, Bing was asked about these comments and he replied:

> *"He probably meant me, along with the others, because people usually think of me when they think of crooners. I don't agree with him. There's nothing degenerating or demoralizing about sentimental songs. I think myself they are a benefit to the public, because the American people like music and like simple themes, and the kind of songs we sing are the kind they like. And whatever is said about radio singers 'defiling the air,' the greater part of the public doesn't seem to agree with it."*
> *(The St. Louis Post-Dispatch, June 4, 1932)*

The next letter from Australia tells us a story of how one young lad was seduced by the Crosby voice leading to a life of listening to the old groaner on inadequate sound systems!)

Vance Sexton, 19 Burdett St., Hornsby, NSW 2077, Australia

...I was 14 years old in 1933 and whilst playing tennis in the school holidays I heard this great voice coming from the sound system of the local theatre. Sometimes during the daytime they played records. We got there before the song ended and the girl serving the milk shakes said that it was Bing Crosby singing 'The Last Round-up'. I've been a fan ever since and that has been my favourite recording of Bing.

Although it was depression days and times were tough, my father purchased the record for my birthday. It cost 4/- and on the reverse was 'Did You Ever See a Dream Walking'. We had a wind-up gramophone with only one record, Caruso singing 'O Sole Mio'. We didn't have a radio but Dad got one for Christmas. Around that time I would have heard Bing's 'Home on the Range'. That was the second record of Bing's I received as a gift. I treasure those records.

It is those early 1933 records of Bing I like the most. Later on I bought my own Crosby discs:- 'Black Moonlight' with 'Thanks', 'I've Got to Pass Your House' with 'Cabin in the Pines' and 'Dinah' and 'Shine'. I was very disappointed when Bing went to his more mellow style. However, I like the songs that showed off the tonal quality of his voice. Some come to mind, 'My Isle of Golden Dreams', 'When You're Away', 'Mexicali Rose' and others.

Now I will jump ahead to a later period where I will make an observation that I haven't heard mentioned before. In the 1960s and 1970s, I heard LPs of Bing that I thought were extremely poor - a weak little voice in the background. I'll list some of those LPs:-

Return to Paradise (I gave this one away. Sorry now)
Thoroughly Modern Bing
Hey Jude
A Time to be Jolly

There are others but I'll stop there. However, since I have updated my sound system at great expense, the above LPs have been restored! I mean the voice is full and forward instead of being buried and all my other Bing (the ones I liked) has improved as well. Count Basie was reported as saying he was disappointed at the LP he made with Bing. So was I until the improved system came along. I looked up Ken Barnes' book on that LP and noticed that he praised it. I said to myself 'I bet Ken has a great system!'

(Editor: Ken does indeed have a great system! In recent months, Carol Sherland, one of our newer members, has been kindly supplying photos of Bing for future use in the magazine. I sought a few more details about her and as her reply made me smile, I thought I'd share it with you.)

Carol Sherland, Oley, Pennsylvania, USA

...As for me, I'm 39 and discovered Bing by accident about a year and a half ago. I was writing a story and envisioned one of my characters to have a great baritone

22nd. March, 1958 - Picturegoer

(In England in the 1950s we had a very good singer/entertainer and also a music company manager by the name of Benny Lee. He wrote this article for the above magazine.)

"It's much tougher getting started these days than when I began."

Who said that? Bing Crosby in a recent US radio interview. In my humble opinion, Bing is talking rubbish. It has never been *easier* than it is right now for any unknown - and generally untalented - amateur to get started. A quick look at a list of current "names" will prove this to anyone. Until this present crazy, anyone-can-be-a-Star era, an artist had to achieve a reputation before being invited to make records. Why the switch?

Because in the past the public was not as disc-conscious as it is today; record sales were dependent on the name-value and selling-power of the artist. And recording on tape had not been thought of, so an artist had to he a competent performer, able to do the job of recording in the minimum of time. Today, competence and artistry are unnecessary. Any number of tapes can be made before choosing the best one. In fact, more often than not, snippets from several tapes are taken and joined up to make one complete master. In other words, nowadays there is no need for professionalism. With the aid of modern recording technique gimmicks, echo-chambers, etc. - plus, of course, the engineer's trusty pair of scissors - anyone can be made to sound good.

In my opinion this is what the public is buying: Sounds! Noises! Were it not as easy as it is to get into the pop business, many of today's "stars" would still be lingering in the obscurity to which they will undoubtedly soon return. That's why I say Bing's wrong to say it's so tough to start out - it's too darned easy.

Benny Lee

In the last edition of *Time Marches Back*, I posed a question "Who was Neil Hamilton?" and Robert Achorn quickly responded:

"To answer your question in BING 126 (page 22), Neil Hamilton (1899 - 1984) was a non-musical, handsome (if stiff-necked) Hollywood leading man. He had occasional stage and television parts. He played starring or featured roles in at least 120 films from 1918 to 1970. They included D. W. Griffith's *America, The Great Gatsby, Dawn Patrol, One Sunday Afternoon* and the 1966 *Batman*. Among films he made in England was the 1937 *The Gang's All Here*.

His biggest starring years were in silent films of the late 1920s, although when sound came in, his clear, precise articulation of dialogue held some appeal for audiences. By 1935, the era cited in BING 126, his fame was beginning to recede. But he kept on working in movies for another 35 years, retiring in 1970.

I'm not aware of anything he did with Bing Crosby, although they apparently shared fan club support in 1935."

Keith Parkinson and Ron Bosley also put me right about Neil and my thanks to them. I also mentioned a crooner called George Barclay and I have turned up some further information from the book *Fascinating Rhythm* by Peter Cliffe which may be of interest.

Quiet and unassuming Charlie Kunz chose from the best available to sing for the Casani Club Orchestra. Among them was George Barclay, who also appeared with Mantovani in his pre-concert orchestra days, and later with Felix Mendelssohn's Hawaiian Serenaders. Two of his records with Kunz were 'Love is a Dancing Thing' by Howard Dietz and Arthur Schwartz, and 'The White Cliffs of Dover', a pretty song by Harry Leon and Leo Towers, not to be confused with Vera Lynn's later hit, which had bluebirds flying over them.

In 1937 George Barclay was Annunzio Paolo Mantovani's principal vocalist, on records anyway. 78s to look out for from that time are 'All Alone in Vienna' and 'Two Pretty Girls'. These recordings are to be found on the Columbia label.

Now you know!

Jim Newell

For a review of this new CD see Jim Reilly's "Keeping Track".

by Irving Berlin. But Rosie Clooney's audio commentary is a definite delight perfectly reflecting her cheerful personality and her obvious fondness for Bing. She doesn't talk all the time (which gives the impression that her chat is genuinely off the cuff) but she comes up with several stories about the making of the film that are fascinating to hear. She also has an infectious chuckle when looking at certain scenes where Bing threw in lines that were not in the script.

Because she made the commercial recording of "Sisters" with her sister, Betty, it was thought for many years that Betty also dubbed Vera Ellen's singing in the film. Not true. Rosie tells us that the voice on the soundtrack was the wife of bandleader, Dick Stabile (Dean Martin's musical director at Capitol Records). I believe I'm right in assuming this was Trudy Stevens who sang on the Decca LP of the film's score.

There's a slight programming hiccup on the DVD. When you select Rosie's commentary, you also get the English subtitles. But this is not very serious. All you have to do is push the subtitle button until it says " Subtitle Off" and it's gone.

Make no mistake, this is a beautiful disc - a best seller in the USA and a genuine DVD chart hit. If all of the goodies on this disc don't persuade you to get into DVD you'll be missing out on a real treat.

Ken Barnes

Editor: Thanks, Ken for a nice review of this classic film. I have got the DVD bug too and I bought a player from Tesco which can easily be adapted to play either the USA or UK type of DVDs. My family were coerced into buying me a couple of DVDs for Christmas and through Amazon I picked up 'A Bing Crosby Christmas' and 'The Adventures of Ichabod and Mr. Toad'.

A Bing Crosby Christmas is of course the CBS-TV special first shown on December 6, 1978. It features Gene Kelly and Kathryn Crosby introducing extracts from Bing's Christmas shows over the years. It has already been released on video so I will not go through all the contents except to say that the quality is first class. The poorest reproduction is from Bing's show in 1962 with Mary Martin. Although that show was originally broadcast in colour, we are given a black and white version which is not in mint condition either. I was struck by how tired Bing looked on that 1962 show and it was of course when he was in great pain with kidney stones. I enjoyed watching all of the extracts from the Christmas shows again and listening to Bing's warm, dulcet tones. It is surprising what you notice after many viewings; for instance, Bing's lip synching on 'Children' was dreadful and really the director should have made him do it again.

What surprised me about the DVD were the extras included on it. First of all, there was a ten minute biography section with extracts from several of Bing's film appearances and then there was what was called a Crosby TV segment which in fact turned about to be about 35 minutes of the 1957 Edsel Show including the marvellous medley with Frank Sinatra. Also there was a Christmas Discography section which listed the songs Bing has recorded with a Christmas connotation and finally, a low quality version of the Mack Sennett short 'Blue of the Night'. These were very nice bonuses which I had not expected and which overall made the DVD good value.

The Adventures of Ichabod and Mr. Toad was top class with superb sound. I marvelled afresh at Bing's professionalism as he narrated and sang the story of Ichabod. What was new to me was the other half of the original film, namely the story of 'Mr. Toad.' Nicely narrated by Basil Rathbone, it was pleasant enough as a build-up to the Crosby portion which probably had the better story.

Malcolm Macfarlane

TIME MARCHES BACK

Jim Newell comes up with a some more items from his extensive collection of film magazines

March 1949 - Film Illustrated Monthly

(Extract from an article by Laurie Henshaw)

....At one time Crosby's main asset was his voice. But when he entered films he soon revealed that he had other accomplishments - personality plus natural acting ability.

At forty-five, his voice is inevitably on the down grade; but there's no indication that his general popularity is suffering from his inability to sing with the technical command he possessed during the 1930s.

Bing has already lost his one-time perennial position as Poll-top vocalist in the States. Men like Frank Sinatra, Billy Eckstine and Frankie Laine are currently pulling in the winning votes. In the 1948 "Down Beat" magazine poll, Crosby was sixth on the list of "Favourite Male Vocalist." It's possible that, in five years' time, he'll be an "also ran" in the eyes of those bobbysoxers who like their song stars young, virile, and well-thatched with wavy hair.

But the loss of Bing's main asset won't matter a jot - not while he retains the charm of manner that radiates on the screen.

21st. January, 1950 - Picturegoer

(A letter to the magazine)

Bing Crosby is a great star, and certainly he could not be more popular. Yet his producers see fit to put him in films with a story hardly worthy of the name, i.e. *Emperor Waltz, A Yankee at King Arthur's Court and Top O' The Morning.*

In these films, Bing gave his usual good performance, but I think it's criminal to waste such rare talent this way.

(Picturegoer Editor's comment: You're certainly right, we feel, maybe *Mr. Music* and *Riding High* will make amends, whatever they are.)

21st. October, 1950 - Picturegoer

Why Don't They.....?

Film the life of Bing Crosby? Even including Al Jolson, there can be no character in the entertainment world who is a better subject for a film biography.

11th. November, 1950 - Picturegoer

Journeying Again.

Good news for practically everybody is the announcement that Bing Crosby and Bob Hope are shortly to make another "Road" film. This time it is the *Road to Paris.*

It will be the sixth of the series but as yet there is no suggestion that Dorothy Lamour will join her old partners.

27th. February, 1954 - Picturegoer

Phoney?

More and more stars are taking to that "phone in your car" convenience, which is possible in California for busy people. The phone fits under the dashboard, is worked by radio, costs the equivalent of twelve guineas a month plus 6d a call.

Bing Crosby has one fitted in his car. He happened to pull up next to Mitzi Gaynor's convertible at a stop light, his phone rang, he lifted it, listened, said "Yes, yes, sure," and handed it across the intervening space to Mitzi. "It's for you," he said. "A Jack Bean calling." (Mitzi should be Mrs. Jack Bean by the time you read this.)

But the sheet music issued at the time of the film's release credits the song to Bing Crosby, Irving Bibo and Paul McVey. It presumably was written in late 1931 or early 1932, when Bing was 28. Bing was out on his own after the breakup of the Rhythm Boys. According to a sheet music historian, Donald J. Stubblebine, the original US sheet music didn't feature a cover picture of Bing - not yet a full-fledged star. Instead, the middle-aged leads of the movie, George Sidney and Charlie Murray, were on the cover. But Bing's popularity was exploding in those early months of 1932. A large picture of Bing and the legend "Introduced by Bing Crosby" quickly replaced Sidney and Murray. Indeed, the revised cover of the sheet music dropped any reference to the film, which it was supposed to help promote.

One of Bing's co-writers was well known in Hollywood. Irving Bibo, who was then 42, wrote songs - sometimes both words and music - for close to 30 films (mostly minor) over 35 years. He published his songs under his own label.

Paul McVey, who was 34 at the time, set aside songwriting to pursue a career in films. He played small parts in 62 films over the next 20 years. He was in one of Bing's films, as a headwaiter in "Dixie."

An interesting sidelight on "The Cohens and Kellys in Hollywood:" Harry Barris, another out-of-work Rhythm Boy, played a small role in the film. Whether Bing got him the part or Barris called the producer's attention to Bing's song is unknown to me. Maybe his appearance was only a coincidence.

Bing did sing "Where Are You, Girl of My Dreams?" publicly. He featured it on his Cremo Singer broadcast February 13, 1932, just before the new Cohens and Kellys film was going to be released. That seems to be the full extent of his promotion of his newest song.

The number is not to be confused with "Where Are You?" the Harold Adamson - Jimmy McHugh song that Bing sang on radio in 1936, or the Sunny Clapp "Girl of My Dreams" that he recorded in 1939.

Robert Achorn

(Editor: Robert set me thinking about the songs Bing wrote or collaborated on and we know about the following which he recorded:

At Your Command
Domenica
From Monday On
(I Don't Stand) a Ghost of a Chance With You
I Would If I Could But I Can't
Love Me Tonight
My Woman
Sail Away from Norway
Tenderfoot
That's Grandma
That's What Life is All About
Waltzing in a Dream
What Price Lyrics
Where the Blue of the Night
Where the Turf Meets the Surf

He also wrote lyrics for several private songs such as 'African Safari' and 'Anthem of the Clans'. In addition, Laurence Zwisohn's book 'Bing Crosby - A Lifetime of Music' lists several other songs which Bing helped with but did not record:-

Believe Me (1931)
Cutesie Pie (1932)
Ev'rything's Agreed Upon (1930)
I Was So Alone, Suddenly You Were There (1932)
You Taught Me How To Love (1931)
You're Just a Beautiful Melody of Love (1932)

And to finish the list, the ASCAP web site tells about another song, written jointly with John Scott Trotter, namely 'The Eyes are the Window of the World'.

Bing was certainly a busy man lyrically.)

DIGITAL VERSATILE DISCS

Wig mentioned these in some detail in his article in the last issue and who better than to review the new release of 'White Christmas' than Ken Barnes, who, by the way, is launching his own DVD company.

WHITE CHRISTMAS

(Universal DVD. USA Cat. No. 06104 . 06104 Region One)

If you're into DVD (and you certainly should be if you're a film buff as well as a Bing fan), there are two things about this release that will become immediately apparent. Firstly, to get the full value of your purchase, you'll need to play it twice. Once to view the film itself and once to hear Rosemary Clooney's audio commentary (in whichever order you prefer) and secondly, you'll be overawed by the beautiful rendering of the colours and general picture definition. At last, we have the full beauty of VistaVision as it was intended to be seen - and in its proper aspect ratio of 1.85:1 which gives you the entire frame as the director (the great Michael Curtiz) intended.

In the main menu, you have numerous selections. It offers you the soundtrack digitally remastered in Dolby Digital 5.1 or in a remastered mono mode. I prefer the former which, while it is not modern state-of-the art 5-channel sound, delivers a beautifully warm well-rounded bass response (especially if you have a good sub-woofer). This is most noticeable in the early portion of the picture when Bing sings "White Christmas." I have compared this with the VHS and the two previous laserdisc versions and it's clearly superior in every way.

Also in the menu, you'll find a selection of theatrical trailers (the original and the re-release) and, best of all, a 17-minute retrospective on the film hosted by Rosemary Clooney which gives a few new insights into the film and contains some stills of Bing and the cast that may be new to everyone. They certainly are to me.

The film itself is so well known that I won't go into detail about the plot or the performances of the stars or the fine score

TWO PLUS FOURS

Yes, this is the short film Bing made in 1930 and Robert Achorn offers his thoughts on it followed by a look at Bing the songwriter

The emergence of a restored version of the 1930 Pathe short subject, *Two Plus Fours*, offers a glimpse into the early Crosby career.

The Rhythm Boys played supporting roles in *Two Plus Fours*, filmed several months after they finished their work in *King of Jazz*, and released in June, 1930. The short was often regarded as lost, but Gary Lacher and Rudy Zvarich turned up copies of it-and of 27 other Pathe shorts-and synchronized the sound from 16-inch discs as part of the restoration. They released the result late last year. I wish it were a gem. It's not. While sturdy in picture quality and sound, it is primitive in style and certainly in attitude, incorporating racial and ethnic "humor" that may have been appreciated by some audiences. Like most 1930s comedy shorts, it was of its time.

It was directed and partially written by Raymond McCarey. Fourteen years later, his brother Leo directed Bing in *Going My Way* - a far more polished and amusing proposition. Top billing (in capital letters) in *Two Plus Fours* went to Nat Carr, an ethnic-style comedian who worked in movies from 1925 to 1941. He was known for his 1929 "Ginsburg series" of Pathe shorts. He again undertook the role of Max Ginsburg, as a tailor in *Two Plus Fours*. The Rhythm Boys were billed - both as a group and individually - at the bottom of the cast list of seven.

Basically, Ginsburg, a tailor in a college town, is threatened with eviction by a bullying landlord. The collegians, led by the Rhythm Boys, eventually rescue him. There seem to be about a dozen collegians in all. Their college, incidentally, is Tait (shades of *Good News!*)

The Rhythm Boys as collegians

Over the years, there has been speculation that this short was created by splicing a one-reel *Two Plus Fours* to the end of an unreleased one-reeler, *Ripstitch the Tailor*. The film doesn't support that theory. The flow of the story is relatively seamless, as short subjects go. Ginsburg is Ginsburg throughout the film. Ripstitch is simply a nickname the college boys apply to him, to his profound annoyance. He hates the name. He even has a sign on the wall of his tailor shop: Don't Call Me Ripstitch. At one point, Harry Barris devilishly cuts "Don't" off the sign.

Conspiracy theorists are permitted to imagine there was an earlier Ripstitch short that was abandoned entirely, with the script rewritten into *Two Plus Fours*. But the final product seems to be all of a piece, not patched together. With short subjects ground out at the rate of two or more a week, would the studio really take time for complicated rewrites or tricky editing jobs? And the information supplied by Gary Giddins and quoted in BING #120 confirms the position.

According to the Pathe Production Sheet, the script was completed May 23, 1930; rehearsals started May 27; shooting started May 29; shooting completed one day ahead of schedule June 2; first previews were at the Belmont Theater on June 19; the film was shipped July 7. Picture cost $19,689.

Barris and Crosby, in plus fours, lead the college boys. Barris, a brash and balding collegian, is entrusted with most of the boys' dialogue. Crosby, with a college-type sailor hat planted firmly on his head, has two or three lines and sings a couple of brief phrases. And he gets to knock down the villain with a quick punch near the end of the film. Most strikingly, at this early point in his career he tosses in the little ballet leap-an attempted entrechat - that he used for humorous purposes in much later films. But most of the time, Bing is simply standing around in medium and distance shots, or looking over the shoulders of the leading figures - basically, Carr, Barris, Thelma Hill and Ed Deering. Al Rinker is there but not really there.

Except for a short collegian chant of "Oh, Rippy," the only music in the film is drawn from the Stein Song. That's the University of Maine song that Rudy Vallee made into a hit after he transferred to Yale. The familiar Maine lyrics are not heard. The collegians, led by the Rhythm Boys, hum and scat the song wordlessly in the opening scene. Later they sing a parody that is a tribute to Ripstitch. By the last scene, an appreciative Ginsburg the tailor joins enthusiastically in singing the Ripstitch parody.

The film is not uninteresting. It moves along quickly. But the physical comedy bits - sitting on a hat, breaking the glass in a door, a horse wearing high boots - are few and far between. So are the laughs. Those looking for a Bing breakthrough won't find it here. He is less star-sprinkled in *Two Plus Fours* than he was in the *King of Jazz*. But there were better times ahead. RKO Radio, which bought Pathe in 1931, evidently liked the results. They teamed Nat Carr and the Rhythm Boys a second time in a one-reel short subject, *Humanette*. It was released in the spring of 1931, when Bing was on his way to stardom via radio. Copies of that film are hard to come by, but perhaps they will show up someday.

Where Are You, Girl of My Dreams?

Early in his multifaceted career, there was Bing the songwriter. He contributed his name and his ideas to a dozen or so songs between 1927 and 1933. In return, he collected royalties and credit, and developed some hit numbers. He recorded them, giving them a push toward popularity. "I Surrender, Dear" and "Where the Blue of the Night..." were among his great homegrown successes.

Bing once explained that he typically contributed a few words to the lyrics, and wrote most of the introductory verses. A grander star of the period, Al Jolson, was widely suspected of lending his name to other people's songs as his price for introducing them, but Bing clearly got involved in some of the writing.

One obscure Crosby tune is one of the few of his that he never promoted with a recording. It had the long title of "Where Are You, Girl of My Dreams?" He never found her, for the number never became popular. The song made its appearance in "The Cohens and Kellys in Hollywood," released by Universal in March, 1932. The film was not a musical and did not star Bing. It was an ethnic comedy, one of a series of eight Cohen and Kelly films. It appears to be lost now, or at least hard to find. The American Film Institute, in creating its massive catalogue of motion pictures, couldn't discover a print. It had to reconstruct the film's story from a script. AFI admitted the song was in the film, but couldn't find out who wrote it.

LOCKHART, GENE (1891-1957) Actor. *In Going My Way* (1944), he was Ted Haines Snr. He's the disapproving father of Haines Jr. (James Brown) when he believes that his son is living outside marriage with Carol James (Jean Heather). Six years later he was again halfway down the cast list in a Crosby picture: *Riding High*. As J. P. Chase, millionaire, by placing a bet on the horse Broadway Bill he causes the odds to plummet. Those two roles sum him up. He was able to play heavies or comic eccentrics with equal ease. A veteran of vaudeville he went on the add value to over one hundred Hollywood movies from *Smilin' Through* (1922) to *Jeanne Eagels*, released the year of his death.

LOESSER, FRANK (1910-1969) Songwriting composer. Bing sang two of his songs in as many films. Loesser got off to a good start by collaborating with Hoagy Carmichael on "Small Fry" for *Sing You Sinners* (1938). Six years later he penned "The Road to Victory" for Bing to sing in the bond raising short *The Shining Future*. However, these are l(o)esser works when measured against his complete musicals such as "Guys and Dolls", "The Most Happy Fella" or "How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying". He won an Academy Award in 1949 in the best song category - "Baby, It's Cold Outside". Hollywood legend has it that Loesser's wife was not as agreeable as her husband, which earned her the sobriquet "The Evil of Two Loessers."

LOMBARD, CAROLE (1908-1942) Actress. After being glimpsed in two "Hollywood on Parade" shorts in which Bing appeared she co-starred with him the following year in *We're Not Dressing* (1934). They were fellow castaways separated by the fact that she was a millionaire's daughter and he was a humble sailor. They gelled well together on screen and Bing had happy memories of their collaboration. When she appeared in *We're Not Dressing* she was a Hollywood veteran, having made her debut in *A Perfect Crime* (1921). Like Crosby, she made some one reel comedies for Mack Sennett. She was the foremost screwball comedienne of the 1930s, making her reputation in such critical and box-office bits as *My Man Godfrey* (1936), *Nothing Sacred* (1937) and *To Be Or Not To Be* (1942). To Be... was her last film. She was killed in a plane crash in January, 1942, whilst returning from a War Bond tour.

Bing and Carole Lombard in We're Not Dressing.

LOMBARDO, CARMEN (1903-1971) Composer and saxophonist. Canadian born brother of Guy, he wrote two songs with Joe Young for a couple of early Crosby shorts. A parody of "Snuggled on Your Shoulder" was featured in *Sing, Bing, Sing* (1932) and "You're Beautiful Tonight, My Dear" appeared in *Just an Echo* (1933). Both songs benefited from recording studio interpretations by Bing. Carmen's career as a musician in his brother's band ran from 1929 until the year before his death from cancer.

LONDON TOWN Film. This 1946 British musical was the nearest Bing came to making a major movie outside Hollywood. Rank wanted to establish itself as a studio with international clout and J. Arthur unwisely thought that if enough money was thrown into a project it would succeed. Its star was one of Britain's most popular comedians of the time - Sid Field. Bing had been approached to appear in the film and the fact that the songs were written by his personal songsmiths Burke and Van Heusen is a strong clue to Rank's pre-production plans. The British studio had half an eye on Crosby okaying the project. Furthermore, Rank hired American Wesley Ruggles to direct. He'd had earlier working relationships with Bing on *College Humor* (1933) and *Sing You Sinners* (1938). The whole *London Town* episode was a bit of a shambles. To bolster box-office potential the cast listed such disparate talents as Petula Clark, Tessie O'Shea, Claude Hulbert and Kay Kendall. The film has been shown on British television from time to time and its main interest now is to watch Field going through the set pieces from his stage routines with foil Jerry Desmonde. Ironically, the overlong 128 minutes production was trimmed for release in the States by editing out Field's performance. The film was retitled *My Heart Goes Crazy* for its American audience. Bing obviously spotted the suitability of the Burke-Van Heusen score because he recorded two of its songs for Decca in the summer of 1946: "My Heart Goes Crazy" and "So Would I".

LORD, DEL (1895-1970) Director. Lord played a minor part in Bing's rise to cinematic fame: he directed the Mack Sennett short *Dream House* (1931). But if you went to the pictures in the 1940s his name must have a familiar ring to it because he directed most of the Three Stooges shorts for Columbia Pictures. Love them or hate them, the Stooges were part of every Columbia feature film booking in suburban cinemas for twenty years. Del Lord will never have a season at the National Film Theatre but he's as much a part of film history as Hitchcock or Disney.

LOVABLE Song. This Gus Kahn - Harry Woods number was important to the plot of the Sennett short *Sing, Bing, Sing* (1932). Bing sang it outside the bedroom window of his girl Helen (Florine McKinney) and they then proceeded to elope together. Eighteen years later that clip turned up in the compilation film *Down Memory Lane*. Bing never made a studio recording of the song.

LOVE IN BLOOM Song. Bing had mixed feelings about the potential of this song although he included it in his 1954 musical autobiography just twenty years after he recorded it to tie in with the film in which it was featured: *She Loves Me Not*. He sang it in that film as a duet with Kitty Carlisle. Ten years on it was played off-screen in Paramount's all-star *Duffy's Tavern*. Now regarded as Jack Benny's signature tune, it was composed by Leo Robin and Ralph Rainger who credit Bing with making it the hit it became.

Wanda Hendrix waits for the bus whilst Bing looks on.

previous autumn and the network was anxious that "Philco Radio Time" was just as popular as the Kraft Music Hall had been on the rival NBC network. So they commissioned a survey to establish the most popular living person. Bing came first, Sinatra second and Pope Pius XII was placed third. A curious result but no more questionable than all the survey results you read. Until I'm approached for my views I'll be suspicious of most popularity polls. Other evidence of Bing's continuing popularity was winning the Photoplay Gold Medal for the fourth year running and remaining America's top box office attraction. The latter is particularly significant because the voters were the same people who read Film Daily and as hard-headed business men they only cast their votes to reflect ticket sales. Two sources put Bing at the top of cinema ticket sales. Box Office, a trade weekly, announced their results in November, 1947 and Motion Picture Herald in January of the following year.

Welcome Stranger was placed 7th in "Variety's" list of box office champions for 1947. And when the film had cleaned up at the box-office, a one hour adaptation was broadcast by CBS in their "Ford Theatre" series on 11th March, 1949, with Bing and Barry Fitzgerald reprising their film roles.

Keith Parkinson

THE A-Z OF BING'S MOVIES

LIVE OAK TREE, THE Song. This was one of several songs composed by Leo Robin and Harry Warren for the 1952 film *Just for You*. A schoolgirl chorus joins Bing when he sings it at a school picnic. Not the most memorable of songs, I can't trace a recording other than the one Bing made for Decca.

LITTLE LOVE, A LITTLE WHILE, A Song. A Maxwell Anderson-Arthur Schwartz song from *High Tor.* It was lifted directly from the soundtrack for the Decca album.

LIVINGSTON, JAY (1915-) Songwriter. His composing skills were noticed by Paramount towards the end of Bing's peak film years. He wrote three songs with Ray Evans for *Here Comes the Groom* (1951). For the record, the songs were "Your Own Little House", 'Misto Cristofo Columbo" and "Bonne Nuit". Paramount had the Livingston-Evans partnership under contract from 1945 to 1955 during which time they kept the studio in the public eye by winning Academy Awards three times in the best song category. Those Oscar statuettes were for "Buttons and Bows" from *The Paleface* (1948), "Mona Lisa" from *Captain Carey, USA* (1950) and "Que sera, sera" from *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1956). Oddly enough none was for a musical. Livingston was the melody man with Evans coming up with the tune. In 1957 there was a perfect marriage of words and music with their beautiful ballad "Tammy". Bing sang a good version of this on the radio but it was Debbie Reynolds' wistful rendition that provided a timeless interpretation. Livingston's writing career faded as the vogue for melodic film title songs passed. He did leave us with the popular theme from the television show *Bonanza* which no doubt took care of his pension needs.

KEITH PARKINSON'S
CELLULOID CROSBY

In the last issue of BING I devoted most of my article to Billy Wilder. Although the film reference books would have us believe that Wilder's first directorial encounter with Crosby occurred in the summer of 1946, when they were involved with *Emperor Waltz*, there had been an earlier meeting. When *Welcome Stranger* was shooting during the spring of that same year, the film's director, Elliot Nugent, decided that he would prove to himself that he could still act. His film career started with Nugent appearing in front of the camera in the silent era. In 1932 he started a twenty year career as a director at Paramount. Within a couple of years he was directing Bing in *She Loves Me Not*. He is seen in one scene in *Welcome Stranger* in the sequence where he plays the doctor sent from Boston to give Barry Fitzgerald an examination to prove the latter is fit to be head of a new hospital and Billy Wilder directed this. Nugent's Hollywood life came to an end with the Crosby picture *Just for You* in 1952. By then he was suffering from the effects of alcoholism and mental problems. He lived until the age of 80. With the demands of film making behind him he worked on Broadway until 1957 and in 1965 published his autobiography, "Events Leading up to the Comedy". He spoke highly of Bing. "Crosby is a wonderful guy and a pretty good actor, but he didn't have any acting experience behind him. He had a lot to learn about acting, but he liked me and I think I helped him. We were good friends."

When a clip from *Welcome Stranger* was shown at the last ICC meeting in Leeds the comment was made that the film was utter corn - and that its enjoyability increases with each viewing! This was Hollywood milking the public's love of the familiar to the full by once more teaming Crosby and Fitzgerald so that everyone who saw the pair three years earlier in *Going My Way* would line up for a ticket at cinema box-offices. And most of them did because *Welcome Stranger* took over six million dollars in North American rentals alone. This time round, instead of a plot involving a crusty old Irish priest and a young curate, Paramount sent *Going My Way* co-writer Frank Butler back to the typewriter to come up with a story about a crusty old Irish doctor and a young locum. The studio expected too much when they released *Top o' the Morning* two years after *Welcome Stranger* with Barry Fitzgerald playing a crusty old Irish police sergeant who can't abide young insurance investigator portrayed by Crosby.

Considering the unbridled sentimentality of *Welcome Stranger*, it is a surprise to find that Butler's story was fashioned into a screenplay by Arthur Sheekman. Sheekman's inspiration for the Crosby character was the scene in which Bing and Ingrid Bergman part at the end of *The Bells of St. Mary's* (1945). Sheekman stated that Bing was the best natural actor he had ever met. Of the farewell scene in *The Bells of St. Mary's* he said: "How few words were spoken. Almost none. Yet those few minutes on screen are unforgettable. Bing does it so easily and with such lack of acting heroics that one is inclined to forget what depth of talent lies behind it." Sheekman had made a reputation working alongside Groucho Marx on a couple of early Marx Brothers movies when he had provided additional dialogue for Groucho to be his loveable insulting self. Even the books published by Groucho were written in collaboration with Sheekman. However, Sheekman proved he could adapt to providing words to fit the Crosby screen image during Bing's days at the top as a light comedy actor. Paramount used him again a couple of years later on *Mr. Music*. He retired from screenwriting when he reached sixty and his last two films gave him the opportunity to exercise a more caustic pen: *Some Came Running* (1958) and *Ada* (1961).

The second female lead in *Welcome Stranger*, after Joan Caulfield, was Wanda Hendrix. She didn't have a lot of screen time as Emily Walters but she confirmed Paramount's faith in casting her in this, only her third film role. The studio had signed her the previous year and at the age of eighteen she looked set to take on substantial parts. But things didn't pan out, and after marrying Audie Murphy in 1949 she spent the rest of her movie career in the sort of action film in which Audie excelled. In the same year as *Welcome Stranger* she was one of several contract players, including Bing, in the Paramount mishmash *Variety Girl*. Her marriage to Murphy was short lived. She later married the brother of actor Robert Stack. In 1979 she was taken seriously ill and lingered in a coma for two years until her death aged 52.

Welcome Stranger has always received good reviews. Even current critics recommend it. In Leonard Maltin's "Movie and Video Guide" it's given three stars (out of a maximum of four). The Radio Times guide recognises the film's weakness but still puts in a good word with the line "All very welcome entertainment, with the male stars bringing a little edge to the easy-going, sometimes soppy proceedings." Contemporary reviews were equally complimentary. Speed's "Film Review" said 'Pleasing, warm-hearted, sentimental little comedy with Bing Crosby acting with all his usual easy charm." Closer to home, the reviewer for the "Hollywood Citizen News" for 29th August, 1947 wrote "When a great picture comes out of Hollywood, it's often a pretty good bet that the producers will try to repeat its success formula in a following film. It is also pretty well known that the succeeding picture usually does not live up to the standard set by the first. In the case of *Welcome Stranger*, however, the rule does not hold good. Taking the stars of Academy Award winning *Going My Way* and repeating its formula of clean, simple, chucklesome human comedy, producer Sol Siegel and director Elliot T. Nugent have come up with another delightful bit of film fare." Which only leaves the all important trade press to comment. Independent exhibitors were very much influenced by the weekly Cinema Exhibitors Association reports in this country, whilst North America looked to Variety and Film Daily for pointers. The latter publication gave the thumbs up to cinema managers when *Welcome Stranger* was given early press showings. Four months before the film's premiere, bookers were encouraged to reach for their cheque books by the words, "In box office parlance *Welcome Stranger* very probably, in the sense of the first word of the title, will be all of that for both exhibitor and patron alike." A rather clumsily worded report, but the message was clear.

In fact, 1947 was a year in which Bing could do no wrong. His weekly radio show had moved to the ABC network the

Crosby Clubs Around The World

The ICC is pleased to be associated with the following Crosby organisations.

Bing's Friends And Collectors Society,
Hobie and Cathie Wilson, 236 Andrieux St., Sonoma, California 95476-6909, USA (tel. 707 996 0257 - e-mail Erinssmile@earthlink.net - Web Site address http://home.earthlink.net/~erinssmile/

Club Crosby, BINGANG
Wayne L. Martin, Editor
435 So. Holmes Ave., Kirkwood, Missouri 63122, USA
(e-mail: ClubCrosby@aol.com)
(Members in Europe should enrol via Ken Crossland, 9 Arden Drive, Dorridge, Solihull, B93 8LP)

The Victorian Bing Crosby Society
Bob Neate, 22 Pakenham St., Blackburn, Victoria, Australia 3130.

Internet sites:

Bing Crosby Internet Museum:
www.kcmetro.cc.mo.us/~crosby/

The Immortal Talents of Bing Crosby
http://www.geocities.com/crissi_n/bing.html

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OTHER APPRECIATION SOCIETIES

We have reciprocal arrangements with the following clubs and societies for publicity purposes. They kindly advertise our club in their magazines and we are very pleased to return the favour.

Sinatra Music Society, 183 Summerfields Avenue, Halesowen, West Midlands B62 9NU (phone:0121-421-7714) This Society produces a most impressive magazine on a bi-monthly basis and includes features on all artistes performing quality popular music. The annual sub for UK members is £12 and write to Des Davis at the above address for details. Web site address: www.sinatra-ms.com

Sinatra Music Society, Dublin Branch, c/o Chris Hitchcock, 21 Roselawn Walk, Dublin 15, Ireland (phone: 01 8212418)

Tony Bennett Appreciation Society, c/o Mark Fox, 13 Sunnyside, Heckmondwike, W. Yorks WF16 0LN

Pat Boone Appreciation Society, P. O. Box 63, Sunderland, SR1 1PN

The Doris Day Society, 31 Kirkfield Rise, Ambleside, Cumbria LA22 9DX

The Al Jolson Society, c/o Richard Selwood, 5 Abbotsfield, Wiveliscombe, Somerset TA4 2SU

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A Danish Advert for "If I had my way"
courtesy of Bertel Dueholm

TRADING POST

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The films I would like are "Double Or Nothing", "Sing You Sinners", "Anything Goes" (1956), "Man on Fire" and "Out of This World" (with Eddie Bracken, 1944). Anyone interested can have 15 records of their choice per film, some records are in good condition, others not so, most of them are on Brunswick.

If the above films are not obtainable, I will sell them at 50p each, also have a good few other 78s of Tony Martin, Perry Como, Dick Haymes and others. Please send a large SAE 8.75 inches by 4.25 inches for list of Bing's records."

Robert Chandler, 424 Third Street South, Naples, Florida 34102, USA. (Tel. 941-262-6437)

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Alan S. Gent (alan.gent@virgin.net)

I am Reg Gent's brother and it is with deep regret that I have to inform you that Reg passed away on the 17th. Jan after a brief spell in hospital. Reg had not enjoyed the best of health in recent years but in spite of his many problems he remained cheerful and found great comfort in listening to his music. He was a life long fan of Bing and amassed quite a large collection of records, tapes and CDs. I am also a fan of the great crooner and have taken some of Reg's records into my collection. However, there remains a significant number and I would like to hear from anyone who would be interested in all, or some of the collection.

Perhaps you could arrange for this letter to appear in the magazine and I will reply to any e-mail I receive.

Arthur Blood, 597 Osmaston Rd., Derby DE24 8NE

Arthur now has available a new Bing stamp at £3 per 20 inclusive of postage to UK members. USA members can order from Wig Wiggins, price $5 for 20. Also Arthur has produced a nice Bing key ring which is shown below. This can be purchased for £2.50, direct from Arthur.

Stan Woodford, 6 Mariam Gardens, Hornchurch, Essex RM12 6QA (tel. 01708 445049)

Stan has on offer many VHS (UK format) video items and film song compilations of Bing that may be of interest. SAE for lists please.

The Record Centre, 45-46 Loveday St., Birmingham B4 6NR (tel. 0121-359-7399)

Ray Purslow and his team are real supporters of the Crosby cause and for your Crosby CDs (and LPs), contact Ray. You can do it all by phone and pay by credit card if you like. It couldn't be easier.

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I had the pleasure of briefly meeting Bing's greatest champion, Gary Giddins, during his book signing at Borders in Chicago, Friday evening. Gary, who is as engaging and funny as he is knowledgeable, gave about a fifteen minute talk on Bing prior to the signing, for which about 25 to 30 people were in attendance (all available chairs were filled, and there were some curious browsers standing by as well - not bad for a Friday night, during blizzard conditions, in the city that was "My Kind of Town" to that "other" singer!).

His talk was basically a thumbnail sketch of A POCKETFUL OF DREAMS, covering many of the same points he did in his article in the January 28 edition of the New York Times. He mentioned that our location was historic in the context of Bing history, as Chicago was the first city in which Bing performed with Paul Whiteman outside of California, in December 1926. And that the Chicago Theatre, one of the venues where Bing performed on that tour, was right across the street.

Giddins then fielded some questions, the content of which indicated that a large portion of the audience was there because of the Ken Burns JAZZ documentary. There were also a few older gentlemen and ladies who simply had fond memories of Bing in his heyday. A couple of younger people inevitably asked about Bing's more recent "reputation", based on the allegations made in Gary Crosby's infamous book of nearly two decades ago. Happily, Giddins put negative suspicions to rest by saying that in his many hours of interviews with Bing's oldest son, Gary Crosby couldn't even remember things actually happening that he had accused his father of. Giddins went on to say that nobody has even read that book (GOING MY OWN WAY), anyway. He asked for a show of hands of people who had read it, and when no one responded, quipped "I rest my case", adding that a tabloid had picked up the serialization rights to it in the early '80's, and then printed all the most scurrilous passages-people heard about them and simply accepted them as fact.

Giddins said he hopes that these and other inequities about Bing will be remedied, including his being nearly invisible to modern audiences except at Christmastime. He cited George Burns' statement made during his comeback in the 1970's, "I'm so old, I'm new", and seemed confident that that would soon apply to Bing. If that does happen, it will be largely due to the Herculean efforts of Gary, as I think all us Crosby fans are aware. He's a very compelling speaker, even more so in person than on TV, and he truly has an encyclopedic knowledge of Bing and his contemporaries, both of song and film.

I can't wait till volume 2 arrives!

Jon Oye

(as taken from the Bing Crosby Internet Museum bulletin board)

Overview

Well, what more can we say? The publicity generated is wonderful. The book is selling well and has featured as high as number 26 in the New York Times best selling list. For Crosby fans, it is indeed the best book ever about Bing and if you haven't got it, buy it soon! I am delighted with Gary's book and the only minor criticism I had was that some of the photos could have been improved, particularly those from the Mack Sennett shorts. Whether we shall be so comfortable with Volume Two, I don't know. Gary is an honest and forthright writer and he will call it as he sees it!

I shared my thoughts about the photos with Gary and offered Ron Bosley's help with pictures for the next book. This is what Gary had to say in his reply to me.

My problem with the photos in the book is that several of them are too small. It was generous of Little Brown to allow me 32 pp of photos, but perhaps we used too many. I disagree regarding the Sennetts. We had a bunch of 8 by 10 glossies but thought they were boring, not showing anything of Bing's comic ability. So Jon Protas at Time/Warner asked to borrow a tape of the films, from which he shot those (and other) poses. A couple of the images are faded, in part because my prints weren't always the best, but I think he captured the feeling of the films better than the glossies - I especially like the one on the top left-hand page. I do appreciate your offer, as always, and will let you know what we need for vol 2. I have many family scrapbook photos that have not been published that I expect to use, but I will need movie and TV shots as well.

The next book will not be out in 2003, so please don't publish any dates that are going to set up expectations I can't meet. I thought I was 90% done with research, but as a result of vol 1, more than two dozen people have now volunteered interviews and material, so the book will be done when it's done. More than that I can't say and I don't need any added pressure; I get enough of that from the publisher.

I am compiling a list of errors in vol 1, to be corrected in the paperback issue, so if you or your readers come across any, do let me know. I am happy to say I've received a great deal of mail attesting to general accuracy, from people I didn't know and some, like Howard Crosby and Rory Burke, who have helped me. . . .

The book tour was exhausting and too long, though generally successful. The only disaster was Atlanta - NO ONE showed up, although we sold nine copies to people who walked in and were drawn to the display table. The best turnout was Spokane (about 175-200 people), Seattle (about 65) and Minneapolis (also about 65). But Chi, Boston, LA, SF, and Bellingham were also good, averaging about 35 - larger turnouts, I'm told, than for most signings.

Can't wait to see your new files! Did you happen to look at the Fred Waring archives? Someone told me there is good material there. A number of people have now agreed to interviews on the strength of vol one, so I'm in the thick of research again, though Mona Freeman continues to refuse - she's the one I want the most.

Regards,
Gary

I silently held the book out. I couldn't even get out, "Can you sign my book?" I just held it out and waited like an idiot. He looked at the book for second, then took it to sign, asking me how to spell my name. I said, "Thank you," he said the same, then I went and sat down in a chair to wait for his lecture.

An elderly man sitting in front of me with his wife had been a writer for the Kraft shows. I heard him talking with a slightly wheeler-dealerish guy who had collected a huge lot of transcription discs. Gary started his talk by saying, "Most of you here probably know as much about Bing Crosby as I do." He went on to speak for about twenty minutes, maybe half an hour. It was very informative. He seemed slightly nervous, as most people are when they have to speak in public. When it was finished, he opened the discussion for questions.

Well, the first one was from this woman sitting in the front row, who was just ticked as hell that her favorite jazz artist had not been covered in the Ken Burns' "Jazz" series. I can't recall who the artist was. Giddins sympathized with her, and said there had been a lot of artists he would have like to have seen covered that weren't ."But the show wasn't called 'A History of Jazz,'" he said. "Ken Burns wanted to focus on several different artists and follow their careers." But this lady would not let up, and he ended up getting in quite an animated argument with her before she would finally let the subject die. They argued for a good five minutes about it. Those were the minutes when you could tell Gary is from New York.

When there was at last a blissful pause in their debate, another woman said, "Let's get back to your book." Gary spun toward her, pointed, smiled and said, "Thank you!" I had my hand raised for a question about Sinatra, but someone else asked it first. What WAS their relationship like. Gary said that they admired each other professionally, but were a bit competitive, in a friendly way. He said what I had always wanted to know: That Bing had strongly disapproved of Sinatra's mob connections, and was bothered by them. He told a story about "High Society." Apparently, Frank was quite a lot of trouble on that film, showing up late every day, bad attitude, etc. Finally, the director and everyone decided that someone had to talk to him, and everyone was afraid to - so they said, "Bing, why don't you do it. You're the only one he'll listen to." So Frank showed up the next day, late as usual. When he got there, everyone left except Bing. He said, "Frank, I need to talk to you. You're making all of us look bad. We're never going to get this picture finished." So from that day on, Sinatra showed up on time every day and acted like a pro.

In the middle of it all, Gary introduced Buddy Bregman, of "Bing Sings Whilst Bregman Swings" fame. He had been sitting two seats away from me the whole time. He talked briefly about the production of the album - no great detail, mainly that Bing didn't like to work past noon. He did say the album is being re-released soon.

Of course, someone inevitably brought up the Gary Crosby allegations, and mentioned his sons' suicides as possibly being caused by Bing's abuse. Giddins got a bit defensive - nobody blames other people's suicides on their parents, was the gist of it. He said he'd really found most of the allegations weren't true. "I interviewed Gary Crosby at length, and went through the book, incident by incident, saying, 'What about this? What about this?' and he couldn't even remember most of it. Giddins said Crosby's only living son from his first marriage (is it Phillip?) only ever saw Bing really lay into Gary one time, "And that actually was a lot worse than anything Gary put in his book, but that was the only time he ever witnessed anything like that."

I ended up asking how one begins research for a book like this. "With a lot of trepidation," he laughed. He went on to give an overview of all the interviews he'd done, and how difficult it was at first, having no Hollywood connections. "I was amazed at the number of celebrities that answer their own phones and pretend they're their secretaries," he said. "Like I'm not going to recognize their voice." His publisher told him he'd never get to interview Jane Wyman. "She hasn't granted an interview in sixteen years," he said. But Gary got her number from someone, and left her a message. He was floored when she called back the next night and consented to be interviewed. "I was the first interview she'd granted in sixteen years," he said, "because I was the first one who didn't want to talk about Ronald Reagan." He was also surprised at how quick Rosemary Clooney agreed to participate. He talked with her many times. "How could the ocean have just washed over Bing?" she'd ask him.

Someone asked another question I was about to ask: Was there anyone he'd really wanted to interview who just wouldn't participate? "Yes," he replied, but he wouldn't tell us who, because he was still working on her. "But she's been turning me down for nine years," he said.

Anyway, it was a great talk which I enjoyed immensely. I started reading the book and, unlike some, I find the genealogical and early childhood information to be fascinating. But that could be because I grew up in Federal Way, Washington - which is right next to Tacoma, so I'm sitting there saying, "Oh, I know where that street is!"

Brian Weber

(as taken from the Bing Crosby Internet Museum bulletin board)

Next with his impressions, comes Jon Oye.

finishes in a very interesting way. Firstly the last line says "I will try to be fair and do better in the future", which from what I would guess to be an eight year old, perhaps give a bit of credence to some of the things he said later. It also ends "regards" which someone has clearly said is not the thing to say, and thus "regards" has been erased, but is still visible, and replaced by "love".

The 1937 letter from the lawyer relates to Bing's financial affairs for that year. It summarises Bing's income as being around $500,000, and makes several points, the more interesting of which are:

- Bing was losing a lot of money on horses - something in the order of $12-15,000; not much out of $500,000 I guess, but a packet by anyone else's standards;
- Bing was heavily into debt from the Internal Revenue service - something in the order of $136,000;
- There is an implication that Bing was less that competent in managing his financial affairs; some of the messages are spelt out in very simple terms, and one indented and highlighted paragraph says (I paraphrase slightly) "you need to understand that your spending money comes out of the portion of your income that's left after you have paid taxes, not the portion that goes over to the Government"!

The second letter from 1941 deals with the possible financial arrangements surrounding a divorce settlement with Dixie.

There is then finally the letter from Dixie's father, E. L. Wyatt. Hand-written, it runs to only a page and a half and urges Bing to have Dixie committed to a sanatorium. Wyatt's advice is to wait until "she is good and drunk" one night, than have her taken off, and to then put the necessary legal steps in place afterwards. The deal he offers Bing is that he will testify on Bing's behalf in any court hearing, providing Bing does not seek a custody order that would deny Dixie all access to the children. Wyatt seems resigned to having Dixie legally determined as incapable of looking after herself however.

All intriguing stuff. It certainly left me with an impression that there was an awful lot under the surface of Bing's first family, stuff which we will probably never get to the bottom of. I don't have the "Diary" with me, but maybe some of this fits in with other things that you have discovered.

Al doesn't want to see these published. As he says, you feel kinda like a voyeur just reading them. What I should have done was get the video camera out and take a film of them, but that only occurred to me as were driving back.

Ken Crossland August 9, 1998

(Well, you can imagine that Ken's e-mail made me draw breath, to say the least! With permission from Ken, I copied the e-mail to Gary Giddins as I felt that the letters helped show Bing in a better light than that suggested by 'The Hollow Man' book. Gary quickly contacted Al Sutton who made it clear that he would destroy the letters rather than see them published. When Al passed on, it seemed that the letters had been destroyed but in fact he had given them to Mark Scrimger of Club Crosby. Mark allowed the two letters about Bing's tax affairs to be published in the latest edition of BINGANG and fascinating reading they make too. It seems that Gary Giddins has the other letters as well and we shall no doubt learn more when Volume Two of his book is published.

There are two distinct schools of thought here. First, the letters are private and should be destroyed. Second, the letters help us to see Bing's problems more clearly and because of this we shall have an even better idea of his achievements. On balance, I favour the second approach but I should be very interested to hear the views of other members.

Gary Giddins went out on a book tour in January and February and some of our members caught up with him and placed reports on the Bing Crosby Internet Museum bulletin board.)

The Book Signings

First we hear from Brian Weber.

Well, I went to the Gary Giddins signing at Book Soup on Sunset Boulevard in Los Angeles on Thursday night. I initially went to the adjoining book store next door, but was redirected to the proper place. When I walked in, Gary was signing books at the counter for about three people waiting in line. I'd say there were about twenty people there total, taking their seats in metal folding chairs to wait for his talk.

I bought a book and waited in line for him to sign it. I was surprised to see he'd shaved off the short-trimmed beard he'd sported in the "Jazz" TV series, leaving just a moustache. I'd never been to a book signing before, and I was surprised at what authors have to go through at these things. People coming up to him, giving him their cards and saying, "If you need anyone to do research...," "I've got this, do you need that," etc. But more on that later.

When I got up to him, I reached out my hand and said, "Hi, Gary, I'm Brian Weber," and, being the shy guy that I am (however mouthy I may seem on this board), the rest of what I was going to say - "I enjoyed seeing you on the 'Jazz' series. I've been a Crosby fan for years. I've been reading the comments about your book on Steven Lewis' web site. I can't wait to read it" - all that just went right out of my head, and I stood there shaking his hand, staring at him like a dumb-ass. I guess I was thinking, "Why the hell would he care who I am or how long I've liked Bing Crosby or anything else?" So we just looked at each other blankly for a few seconds, and

they feel like they were written by a puritan tribunal: they take people to task for being philanderers or whatever, and this interferes with the way they see the work. I wanted to connect the two."

With this in mind, Giddins wrote a proposal, and his agent, Georges Borchardt, got "a pretty good advance" from Morrow, where Bresnick was an editor. But when he began conducting interviews for the book, Giddins remembers ruefully, "Everybody I talked to said they loved him! It turned out that nothing in *The Hollow Man* stands up. Their primary source, Al Rinker [Crosby's piano-playing partner in vaudeville and for many years after], was so offended by the book that he wrote a private journal to correct it." Rinker's daughter gave Giddins a copy of the journal, one of the many invaluable primary sources that turned up in those serendipitous, unexpected ways every nonfiction writer cherishes. Crosby's nephew casually handed over a decade's worth of correspondence and legal papers that clarified the singer's fraught business relations with his brothers. A massive cache of letters discarded by Crosby's first wife, Dixie, not only provided a detailed picture of his finances but also gave a much more favorable impression of his behavior toward her as their marriage foundered. Giddins first heard about those letters when they were owned by a collector who declared he would burn them before he'd let Giddins see them. *A Pocketful of Dreams* was in page proofs when Giddins learned that the collector had given them to the editor of a Crosby fanzine with whom he had a cordial relationship. An impassioned phone call and "the most diplomatic letter I've ever written" persuaded the fanzine editor to send them along.

"It was one of those miracles that makes you really believe there is a Being looking out specifically for you - and this is a major concession for an atheist," jokes Giddins. The letters will be a major source for volume two, but a couple were relevant to the final pages of volume one. Little, Brown delayed printing so that Giddins could rewrite; the new passages were completed so close to publication they aren't even in the advance galleys..."

Volume two of Bing Crosby, he adds, will carry his case study of the entertainment industry into the age of television. "In 1946, Crosby single-handedly changed radio from a live medium to a pre-recorded medium. This has been forgotten, because a year later television arrived and radio seemed irrelevant, but television followed the same arc, from a live medium to pre-recorded broadcast on videotape. It's a great story."

He's not really sure what comes after that story. "I'm about to take my first vacation in nine years, then there's the book tour, then it's back to volume two that will be my jail for a while."

Wendy Smith,
Publishers Weekly, December 11, 2000

The Crosby Letters

Your Editor was particularly interested in the reference to the "massive cache of letters discarded by Crosby's first wife, Dixie" as I had been aware of these but thought that they had been destroyed. By way of background, here is an e-mail which Ken Crossland sent me in August, 1998.

. . . Purpose of the letter however is to share something with you whilst its still fresh in my mind. Yesterday we went up to Sacramento for the day to renew our acquaintance with Al Sutton, who we last saw when we stayed with him and his late wife Mil, in 1984. Al must be pushing 90 now, and whilst frail, his mind is razor sharp. What's more his collector's instincts are as strong as ever. He handed over his Crosby record collection to a young collector called James Ray Crenshaw a few years ago, Al's primary objective being to see it go to a good home and one where it would be preserved. Rather than see that as the end of his collecting however, all he did was use the space to add to other collections that he has. These include everything you could wish for (and more!) about Lindbergh, but of course also other bits of Crosby memorabilia.

A couple of years ago he had a call out of the blue from a guy who lives in Redding, around 200 miles to the north of Sacramento. This guy had worked for Bing Crosby Enterprises back in the Forties and one day had a call from Dixie to clear out some items from Bing's desk. Her instructions were just to dump everything, but this guy clearly realised that some of the stuff ought to be preserved for posterity (and future profit), and that's what Al has now.

Some of it is just more of the familiar Crosby oddities that we have seen before - various golf medals, and an "honorary Chief Of Police" badge from somewhere or other. The more interesting stuff however is a series of letters to Bing, variously from Dixie, the boys and Dixie's father, all of them hand-written, plus two letters from 1937 and 1941 from Bing's attorney cum tax adviser.

The letters from Dixie are rather sad. They are undated but seem to be written to Bing whilst he is in Rio. Would you be able to date them from this from the Diary? *{Editor: September/October 1941}* They all begin "Angel" which Al tells me was Dixie's pet name for Bing, and they all have a flavour of someone trying to win back some love and attention that has gone elsewhere. As Al says, the really interesting thing would be to see the letters, which Bing had written and to which these in part are replies.

There are then letters from Gary, Phillip and Dennis, which from the child-like writing would suggest a date of around 1939/40. They have an air of an enforced chore about them, and Gary's

with swinging Èlan, as demonstrated on his 1957 album, "Bing With a Beat," and he continued to enjoy other triumphs. He joined with Sinatra, Armstrong and Grace Kelly for the musical film "High Society," in 1956, and was widely thought to have outshone his rival - he once chose his duet with Sinatra ("Well, Did You Evah?") as his favorite movie scene. Crosby's television specials, through the mid-1960's, were highly musical and invariably successful. Yet in this new climate, his greatest strength was considered a liability. Sinatra rang the rafters, Tony Bennett poured out his heart and Presley rocked, but Crosby's preternatural cool, his canny gentleness, was too laid-back, too easy for the nuclear age.

By then he had begun to retreat from the stage. He now had a young wife, Kathryn Grant, and three small children, and he was determined not to repeat the mistakes of his first marriage to Dixie Lee, when his work kept him away for long stretches and he tried to compensate by imposing strict disciplinary measures on his four sons. He continued to broadcast Christmas specials, which led to a famous duet with David Bowie ("The Little Drummer Boy") and was seen frequently on the variety show "Hollywood Palace." Yet his film career came to an end with "Stagecoach," in 1966, and American record companies no longer wanted to record him; his 1970's comeback was fueled with albums made and released in England, including a treasurable 1975 duet with Fred Astaire, "A Couple of Song and Dance Men." At Crosby's death, two years later, his contemporaries mourned him, but to a younger generation he had become a Norman Rockwell poster, an irrelevant holdover from another world.

His art, however, retains its power in unexpected ways. His versions of late-19th-century and early-20th-century songs are oddly compelling, and it is difficult to imagine another singer - Sinatra, for example - attempting them; I once saw an opera expert reduced to tears by Crosby's "Sweetheart of Sigma Chi." His great Depression waltzes ("Mexicali Rose," "The One Rose") recapture the dark side of that era as nothing else does. Crosby's early collaborations with Bix Beiderbecke and Ellington and later ones with Armstrong, Eddie Condon, Connie Boswell, Johnny Mercer, Woody Herman, Bob Crosby (his kid brother), Eddie Heywood, Bob Scobey, Rosemary Clooney and many others retain their ingenuity and rhythmic zest. No matter how popular he became, his prowess and his jazz beat kept him honest. For that reason, he continues to speak to us, and in that sense, he remains our contemporary.

Gary Giddins

(Editor: Gary really has the gift of conveying Bing's greatness, doesn't he? Apart from the book reviews and Gary's own articles, he has been interviewed frequently too and one particularly significant interview with Wendy Smith of Publishers Weekly is reproduced below.)

Gary Giddins: The True Life Of A Crooner

Bing Crosby might seem an unlikely subject for Gary Giddins, best known as jazz columnist for the Village Voice and author of the 1998 National Book Critics Circle Award winner *Visions of Jazz*. Yet Giddins found the subject so absorbing that *Bing Crosby: A Pocketful of Dreams*, which Little, Brown will publish in January, closes in 1940, the year the already popular singer and radio personality became a mega-movie star with the release of *Road to Singapore*. There was just too much interesting material to cram into a single volume, says Giddins, though he admits he was initially skeptical when Paul Bresnick, who had edited his previous biography of Louis Armstrong, suggested he might want to write at length about Der Bingle.

"I had always loved Crosby's early records. In fact, there's a chapter about him in my very first book, *Riding on a Blue Note*," recalls the writer, seated in the book- and CD-crammed office of his Greenwich Village apartment. "But I didn't take the later music seriously, and I didn't know the movies. When I looked into it, I was shocked to discover that no one had ever written about him seriously. There had only been fan books and a hatchet job.

"Two things began to interest me about him as a subject for a book," says Giddins. "First of all, I could use Crosby to trace the whole development of American popular culture, something I had always wanted to do. Just by telling his story, I can show how records, radio and movies developed. I can talk about the conversion from acoustic to electric recordings, which changed the way we hear music and was conducive to recording baritones like Crosby. I can talk about the development of radio and the condenser microphone. [Crosby's fabled skill with the mike fostered a more intimate singing style.] I can talk about the change from silent to sound movies, Crosby being one of the first major stars of talking pictures. He was at the center of so many different aspects of the cultural life of that period."

Ironically, Giddins's second reason for thinking a Crosby biography might be interesting proved to be based on misinformation. "I believed the hatchet job," he says, referring to Donald Shepherd and Robert F. Slatzer's controversial 1981 book, Bing Crosby: The Hollow Man. "I assumed that he was an SOB in private life, and this fascinated me: how does someone who's cold, remote and disagreeable in private create the public illusion that he's the soul of warmth? I thought that was a valid subject. I find so many show business biographies distasteful because

songs - he had morphed into a grand old man while retaining little of the bite of his contemporary, Louis Armstrong, or his aging offspring, Frank Sinatra. Crosby's reputation faltered along with his music after his death, in 1977. When his eldest son, Gary Crosby, published a bitter memoir describing the unflappable Bing administering vigorous corporal punishment, his halo tilted and crashed. Soon the afterlife of his career imploded. Jazz lovers kept his memory alive, mainly because of his early records and the later collaborations with Armstrong, Louis Jordan, Les Paul and others. But jazz lovers are by nature classicists, and Crosby had spent most of his life on the other side of the divide: the pop world, where success is measured in numbers - a world remade by rock, in which even the oldest of oldies postdate "Heartbreak Hotel."

Yet consider this: in 1946, three of the five top-grossing Hollywood pictures ("The Bells of St. Mary's," "Blue Skies," "Road to Utopia") were Crosby vehicles; for five years running (1944 to 1948), he was No. 1 at the box office; his radio programs (1931 to 1962) attracted at their wartime peak as many as 50 million listeners; he recorded nearly 400 hit singles, an achievement no one - not Sinatra, Elvis or the Beatles - has come close to matching. Could a man who spoke so deeply to so many for so long have nothing to say to us now? For a biographer, Crosby's career offers more incentive than mere statistics. He is the ideal figure for tracking the rise of American popular culture. He played pivotal roles in the development of the recording, radio and film industries, while virtually defining the microphone as a singer's instrument. His influence on other singers - including Sinatra, Elvis and John Lennon, avowed fans all - would be hard to overstate, and he managed to maintain his popularity through several major cultural upheavals in 20th-century American history: Prohibition, Depression, World War II, the cold war and the affluent society.

Like many in my generation, I was drawn to the enunciated clarity, effortless swing and insouciant scat-singing of Crosby in his jazz years while ignoring his later work as meretricious. After listening to his exhaustive discography, more than 2,000 recordings (including radio broadcasts), it became apparent that his voice and style peaked not in the 1920's, when he joined Paul Whiteman's orchestra as the first ever full-time band singer, but a decade later, in Hollywood. Jazz-born prejudices are often inadequate in evaluating a popular idol. Irving Berlin once said he wrote music for the "mob" and that as far as he was concerned, the mob was always right.

Crosby's Dickensian appetite for every kind of song obliges us to savor the validity and verve of music created not by or for the elect but for the delectation of the millions. The mob is not always right. Its infinite longing for rote repetition and screwy novelties ("Three Little Fishies," anyone?) is matched by its impatience with music that demands concentration. Yet the ability of the millions to discriminate is not negligible. Examine the pop records released between 1934 and 1954, and compare the major hits to the numberless misses: you cannot help admiring the mob's batting average. . . .

On a 1943 edition of "Command Performance," a radio series recorded on transcription discs for shipment to overseas forces, the M.C., Dinah Shore, remarked, "You know, Bing, a singer like Frank Sinatra comes along only once in a lifetime." Bing's famous response: "Yeah, and he has to come along in my lifetime." From 1931, when Crosby first triumphed on network radio and his rivals faded, through 1940, when Tommy Dorsey took the country by storm with "I'll Never Smile Again" and other records featuring vocals by Sinatra, Crosby ruled mainstream pop. Armstrong, Bailey, Billie Holiday and Jimmy Rushing prospered in jazz, just as other singers found audiences in country, gospel and other idioms. But Crosby was king of the mountain - the national voice, America's troubadour. In Sinatra, he had at long last a worthy heir, a contender. By the end of 1943, Sinatra beat him in the Down Beat poll of popular singers. High school and college clubs as well as professional pundits routinely debated their respective merits.

Yet, contrary to the Sinatra myth, at no time in the 1940's did Sinatra seriously crimp Crosby's popularity. This was the period when Bing was twice nominated for best-actor Oscars (he won in 1944 for "Going My Way"), when he recorded the most successful record of all time, "White Christmas," and when he was named in a poll of servicemen as the man who had done most for Army morale. (Enlisted men had little use for Sinatra, who was disparaged as a draft dodger and seducer.) When the troops came home, Crosby enjoyed a new crest in popularity, while Sinatra's career dimmed and almost faded to black. It was Crosby who best captured the tenor of the times in recordings like "It's Been a Long, Long Time," a definitive home-from-war anthem, which never mentions the war.

By 1955, things began to change. The previous year had been a glorious one for Crosby. He had starred in the top-grossing picture of the year, "White Christmas," and scored his third Oscar nomination for his stunning portrayal of an alcoholic has-been in "The Country Girl." Yet what a difference a year made. Sinatra revived himself, retooled as a jet-age hipster balladeer, with a deepened voice and style and a poise fine-tuned by tribulation. Elvis Presley was knocking them dead in the South and about to break nationally. Crosby's vocal style had changed little. He could still croon

microphone - made music more human, not less. You didn't have to shout out music on the radio. You could focus on nuances of your voice. He knew that you weren't singing to a zillion people out there in "radio land." He was singing to one person in front of the radio - and he transferred that same approach to his recordings.

Q: You've also written a biography of Louis Armstrong, who was the first great singer in jazz. How do they compare?
A: Armstrong is the foundation, because he introduced swing, the spontaneity. Bing took it into the mainstream. He could sing anything. I love Armstrong's voice, but Crosby had a voice that more people could relate to. Armstrong once described Bing's voice as "like pouring gold out of a cup." He loved Bing's singing. It was Crosby's success that influenced Armstrong to sing ballads.

Q: One of Crosby's weaknesses is his material. He would go from great songs to pretty corny ones. Why's that?
A: He just wasn't as discriminating as he should have been. When it came to making records, he let his producer, Jack Kapp, choose the songs for almost all the records. When it came to his radio show, however, Bing would pick the songs and you'd see him doing tunes by Duke Ellington and Hoagy Carmichael.

Q: Did you like both his jazz records and his pop records?
A: Initially, the only Crosby I knew was the jazz stuff. I came upon him by accident. I bought all the Bix Beiderbecke records from the '20s that I could find as a kid, and every once in a while there would be a vocal by Crosby and it caught my ear - very impressive. But that's all I knew about him for years. The rest I thought was just vanilla mainstream.

Q: What made you change your mind?
A: There was a two-record set of Crosby pop material from the early '30s that came out when I was in college and I really liked it, which was strange because I hated most mainstream pop at the time. Then in 1976, he came back for this last hurrah at the Uris Theatre in New York. I covered it for the Voice, and he was so cool and self-possessed on stage. You couldn't take your eyes off him.

At the end of the concert, he did this medley of what turned out to be 46 of his hits, and everyone in the audience was just applauding and cheering. I started getting intrigued. Who else has meant that much to so many people for such a long time in pop music?

Q: What do you think was his greatest period as a singer?
A: Probably the mid to late '30s. That's the point where he gets rid of all the mannerisms and his voice is at its richest. . . . Songs like "You Must Have Been a Beautiful Baby," which he did with his brother Bob's jazz band. His phrasing on that is sensational. "Someday Sweetheart" is a great jazz record. The ballad records from that period were also extraordinary. . . . "Mexicali Rose" and "The One Rose." He made them into powerful Depression waltz hymns that suggest a darkness in this period that you don't find in any other aspect of popular music. When we think of the '30s, we think of stomping feet and flying skirts and swing bands. But there was a depth in Crosby's music. "Home on the Range" is a record I play for my most skeptical friends. He took this song, which was virtually unknown in 1933, and he turned it into this virtual hymn, which was a longing for some other past that we all shared. That's really the motif in a lot of the Crosby songs when he's in charge of the material. They speak of some distant time and place. There's even some of that in his version of "White Christmas."

Q: Finally, what about Crosby the man? He has frequently been portrayed as aloof and cold. What did you find?
A: That was one of my early interests in the book. I wanted to deal with the idea of a guy who is perceived to be one way - your next-door neighbor, the soul of warmth, your brother under the skin - but who in private life is cold, aloof, virtually unknowable. That was what you always heard about Crosby.

But when I started doing the research, I found all these people, from Rosemary Clooney to Jane Wyman, who spoke so warmly about him. I tried to pursue the dirt, but the more I researched the more I started liking the guy. What I discovered is that Crosby is a lot more like the guy all his fans thought he was than the way he is often thought of today. He was as warm as that voice.
(*Robert Hilburn, Los Angeles Times,* March 3)

So, some great coverage and this must be the best publicity about Bing we have had since his death. Well done, Gary.

The book has only been published in the USA and Canada so far and I understand negotiations are still continuing for a UK publisher. It is possible for those in the UK to order the book over the Internet from say Amazon or Barnes and Noble. If anyone is having real trouble in obtaining the book, please feel free to contact me as I can order it for you from Amazon.

Gary Giddins wrote an interesting article for the New York Times in January and we present an abridged version of this here.

Bing Crosby, the Unsung King of Song

FOR the last decade, whenever I mentioned to anyone that I was working on a life of Bing Crosby, the usual response was, "Why?" I can't say I was surprised.

For 30 years, between 1927 and 1956, Crosby was a looming presence in America's cultural landscape. At the peak of his career, in the 1930's and 1940's, he was thought by many to be the most famous American alive. For much of that period, he was undoubtedly the most admired. The cycle of "Road" pictures with Bob Hope established Crosby as a great comic actor. Yet by the 1960's, the ocean began to roll over Der Bingle, and though he continued to sell millions of records - chiefly holiday

He revs into the last vamp, does his patented airplane arm-swing and kicks the song into the empyrean, ending with a coda, "And that's jazz." Relaxed jazz, controlled chaos, ease and expertise - that is the style HE created. If Armstrong did hot, Crosby did cool, for the fattest part of the 20th century.

And that's Bing.

(*Richard Corliss,* extracted from *Time* magazines of February 14 and 21)

Village Voice jazz critic Gary Giddins was one of the most prominent talking heads in Ken Burns' recent PBS documentary "Jazz," but thus, far hordes of paparazzi aren't trailing him.

"Thankfully, no one recognizes me," Giddins told us, laughing. The journalist is in town to sign copies of his 728-page biography, "Bing Crosby: A Pocketful of Dreams" (Little Brown & Co., $30). Giddins has devoted nine years to researching and writing about Crosby's long career (a second volume is due in 2003) and is hoping to undo some of the damage Crosby's legacy suffered at the hands of his alcoholic son Gary Crosby's 1983 daddy dearest-esque memoir, "Going My Own Way."

"I ran nine hours of tape talking to Gary," Giddins said, "and when I would challenge certain allegations in his book with my own research, he would tell me, 'I don't remember writing that. I was drunk at the time.' He's a very bitter man. I'm not saying Bing was a saint, but there's a difference between spanking and child abuse. "

The author says he hopes the renewed interest in the crooner's career will result in Crosby's long-out-of-print music and early movies being put back on the market.

(*Richard L. Eldredge, Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, February 21)

This was a long time coming, but it might have been worth the wait. . . . Everything written heretofore about this giant figure in American popular culture has been slapdash and self-serving, for good or ill. Giddins is clearly determined that Bing Crosby will receive the serious attention he deserves.

Most Americans 30 and under know nothing of Bing Crosby. Baby boomers have, if anything, a negative impression created, for the most part, by two literary hatchet jobs on Bing's reputation after his death, one administered by his son Gary.

. . . Gary Giddins is by no means writing an adulatory puff piece. This is serious biography and all traces of clay on Crosby's feet are illuminated with pitiless reporting, footnoted and irrefutable. But there is something here that has never been seen until now. This is not a reassessment. This is the original assessment of a towering figure in American music.

With precision, Giddins outlines the dimension of Crosby's contribution. I hope you have a chance to read it. There is a lot of America's 20th-century story in his book. And Bing emerges as a major jazz figure. Does that surprise you? Small wonder. Bing's movie career, riches and bad posthumous press have buried the memory of his breakthrough. Until now.

(*Nick Clooney, Cincinnati Post*, March 7)

Bing Crosby's popularity as a singer was staggering. Between 1927 and 1965, he released nearly 400 songs that made the national sales charts-about twice as many as Frank Sinatra and Elvis Presley combined during their careers. Even more remarkable is Crosby's influence on popular music. Louis Armstrong adored his singing, and Sinatra called Crosby his greatest inspiration. So why is Crosby, who died of a heart attack in 1977 at age 74, rarely mentioned when pop singers are discussed today?

That's one question that led Gary Giddins, the noted Village Voice jazz critic, to spend a decade researching and writing a comprehensive, two-volume biography of Crosby. The first volume, "Bing Crosby: A Pocketful of Dreams-The Early Years, 1903-1940," has been published to mostly glowing reviews by Little Brown and Co. The second volume is due in 2004. Crosby was also an Academy Award-winning actor and a hugely successful businessman. Giddins, 52, who was featured prominently in Ken Burns' "Jazz" TV documentary series, explores all facets of Crosby's life in the book, but his singing was the topic of our interview.

Question: How good a singer was Crosby?

Answer: He's in the pantheon, no question in my mind, whether you think of him as a jazz singer or pop singer. He had a huge influence on almost everyone who came after him-even the country music market. Roy Rogers told me every cowboy singer changed his style after Bing started singing those western songs. They all wanted to sound smooth and cool. His jazz records, too, stand up well. [Jazz singer] Jon Hendricks said that there were only two jazz singers that he and his friends listened to when they were growing up: Louis Armstrong and Bing Crosby.

Q: So why is he ignored today?

A: His greatest asset in the early years became his greatest deficit in the '60s. When you listened to him in those early years, he was so cool, so laid-back, so confident. His audience listened to him and they knew everything was going to be all right, which is what people needed during the Depression and World War II and after the war.

But when you got into the nuclear age and it's rock 'n' roll and it's Sinatra's jet-set hipsterism, Crosby is still cool and laid-back. He suddenly becomes irrelevant. Sinatra went deeper than Crosby in terms of interpreting lyrics. That left Bing no longer fitting in with that period.

Q: In some ways, Crosby defined modern pop singing. What were his contributions and strengths?

A: Besides the gorgeous voice, he had perfect time. He was probably the first white singer who really understood the importance of time, which is something he learned from Armstrong. Even when he recorded junk - and he recorded an awful lot of it - he always knew where the downbeat was. Other singers from his time - Rudy Vallee, Dick Powell and the rest - had no sense of time.

The other thing is, Bing was the first pop singer, to my knowledge, who actually cared what the lyrics meant. He had eight years of schooling with the Jesuits and two years of law. He was an educated man who specialized in elocution, recitation and debate. When he looked at a lyric, he wanted to know what story was being told and make that central to his vocal.

He also recognized the paradox that electricity - the

Monaco and James Van Heusen. They fashioned some fine tunes for him, including "Swingin' on a Star" from "Going My Way" and the title songs of "Pennies from Heaven," "Rhythm on the River" and "Road to Morocco" (with its clever payoff: "Like Webster's dictionary/ We're Morocco bound") .But they were songsmiths of the high second rank. It's tantalizing to think of the songs a Mercer or Carmichael or Loesser could have written for Crosby - and how much richer they would have made his musicals seem and sound. . . . Any book with three subtitles has the promise - indeed, the threat - of exhaustiveness in its 728 pages. For Giddins, that meant he sat through a lot more of the Crosby films than I could manage (and more of each film, I'll warrant: some of the '30s musicals almost demand fast-forwarding through the comedy specialties by Burns and Allen, Bob Burns, Martha Raye and others too grating to mention). Giddins is attentive and generous to Crosby's films, finding saving graces, vagrant epiphanies or sociological sassiness in each. He is also knowledgeable about the movie milieu, offering paragraph-long portraits of dozens of Bing's co-workers. The book ends with "Road to Singapore," and one avidly awaits his consideration of Crosby's later film work: the rest of the "Road" series, the 1944 "Here Come the Waves" (with "Ac-cent-tchu-ate the Positive" sung by Crosby and Sonny Tufts in blackface, one of the latest films to use minstrel racism in a contemporary setting), the priest pictures ("Going My Way" and "The Bells of St. Mary's") and the mature work of the mid-'50s, when Bing finally grew up as an actor. . . .

"The Country Girl" is part hokum, part harrowing portrait of an old performer (we won't say self-portrait). Odets' form of dramaturgy is to load the dice against the Kelly character, then let her load the gun against Crosby and Holden. Crosby is the least shrill; that is part of his drunk's cunning. Frank lies in the same melodic, trombonish tone that Crosby had used to project sincerity for a quarter century. But when he's not pushing the blarney, he gives subtle glimpses of the decay that age and alcohol etches in a man. His face is fallen, creased with defeat, his posture hunched and haunted, his demeanor frail. Behind the old Crosby charisma was a self-confidence so pure that he didn't have to push it in America's face; but here he's playing a man with so little confidence that his face anticipates reproach. He's not the star he was, or the man. "Hey, aren't you Frank Elgin?" someone asks, and he murmurs, "I used to be." It is a brave and delicate consideration of decay, by someone who was finally in his acting prime.

The prime wouldn't last long. In fact, you could understand Crosby at his movie best in one double feature: "The Country Girl" and "High Society." He sings "True Love" to Grace Kelly (a stand-in for Kathryn); he bests Sinatra in their duet-duel "Well, Did You Evah." And in the four flavorful minutes of "Now You Has Jazz," with Armstrong and his band, Crosby displays his vocal and verbal acuity in top form. This song, like the one with Sinatra, was considerably revised - ad-libbed, if you like- from Cole Porter's text. Bing's asides are apt and inspired: when Armstrong sings "Frenchmens all/ Prefer what they call/ Lay jazz hot," Bing apostrophizes a très-français "formidable!" Satch, Trummy Young, Billy Kyle and the rest broil their venerable chops in a sweetly swingin' 12-bar blues. And Bing leads them, a simpatico impresario, with a suave verve. Beneath the famous Crosby savoir-faire, we for once sense the adolescent thrill he must have felt back in the mid-'20s, when he first heard Armstrong create the naughty form of music that Bing made nice.

Bing and Frank in their "duet-duel."

the career. In 1993, he provided the introduction for a new edition of Crosby's autobiography, "Call Me Lucky," written 40 years earlier; a publisher's note said, "His long-awaited biography of Bing Crosby is slated for publication . . . in the fall of 1995." At last, the long wait is over-or partly over. The more than 700 pages of "Bing Crosby: A Pocketful of Dreams" tell only half the story, the years from 1903 to 1940 - no "White Christmas," no Father O'Malley, no Frank Sinatra on the horizon. And no big dramatic crisis to neatly split the story in two. Indeed, once Crosby got rolling, there were no crises: he shot to the top before he was 30, "having fallen upward every step of his career," Giddins remarks, and he stayed there until rock 'n' roll supplanted his music and the 60's undid the America he epitomized.

Perhaps what has taken Giddins all this time - apart from working on his award-winning "Visions of Jazz" and on the Ken Burns project "Jazz"- has been the difficulty of grappling with a subject who so successfully presented himself as simple, even transparent, yet who actually was enigmatic, even opaque. Previous biographies have been either idolatrous or (as Giddins calls one of them) "scurrilous"; this new account may at moments overinflate Crosby's significance, but when the facts are unpretty we aren't spared them. Most of all, though, Giddins is in love with Crosby the singer, and here his knowledge of popular singing gives his book the weight and value that no other account commands. . . .

Gary Giddins has performed a great service in tracking Crosby's life and career so scrupulously. He's not only superb on the music, but he has lovingly considered the films of the 30's - he's particularly perceptive about the vaudevillian "Road" pictures (Crosby and Hope "are anarchists with sweet souls"). Sometimes his prose gets a touch fancy or peculiar - a song treatment is "supernally relaxed," his work "failed to sate Bing's energy," Bing "had haplessly incarnated the excesses of Prohibition" - and one can argue with certain judgments: Is Crosby really a "far more important artist" than John McCormack? But these are hardly blemishes on a masterly performance. Some readers may feel that this book tells them too much. But those of us who have been waiting all these years to learn everything there is to know about Crosby can only be grateful for Giddins's depth of detail and soundness of judgment. Now, where is Volume 2?

(Robert Gottlieb, New York Times, February 11)

Giddins is an engaging, even seductive writer - a terrific synthesizer who makes passionate arguments sensible. His take on Crosby's movies is knowledgeable, always erring (if this can be called an error) on the positive side. Bing may not be a true jazz singer, but Giddins makes a jazz symphony of his early life and career. "A Pocketful of Dreams" is an inspired improv on the familiar materials of that life; a righteous riff, with footnotes. The book makes Crosby hip by association, not with Armstrong, but with Giddins.

The book makes an argument familiar to all proselytizing critics. Crosby, Giddins says, isn't like all those people you don't like (like Al Jolson); he's like those people you like (Armstrong, Sinatra, Elvis). And, oddly, the argument is just about convincing. Crosby did indeed learn from Louis - a debt he would gleefully repay with dozens of recorded duets, frequent invitations to Armstrong to appear on "Kraft Music Hall" and the securing of star billing for Armstrong in Crosby's 1936 film "Pennies from Heaven" (at the time a rare plum for a black performer).

If Bing helped Louis, he could be said to have given artistic birth to a generation of singing stars; baritones were the almost exclusive rage for the next two decades. Specifically, his example taught Sinatra that the pulp poetry in a good lyric could be enriched by honoring it, and showed Presley how the low range for his ballads could be as sexy as the squalling tenor of his rockabilly.

In the Presley era and beyond, stars made an impact by going too far, by affronting community propriety (when the community still had propriety), by translating the lewd and the crude into popular art. Bing was just the reverse. He didn't outrage or astonish; he reassured. He was not on the edge; he created a new middle, which always should have existed but didn't until he eased into it. Imagine that, far into the history of food - say, around 1930 - someone had come up with the potato. That was the eureka element to Crosby's relaxed style. He was Everyman singing in the shower, or Everyman as he thought he sounded there. If it is a considerable achievement to rebel against the prevailing standard, surely it is a greater one to create that standard. Bing didn't break the mold; he made it. . . .

He was, of course, just a golden cog in the Hollywood dream machine - an employee in the studio era. But Crosby was also the architect of his own career, the man who got his radio and musical friends cast in important film roles, who would boycott the movie set, playing golf until a director agreed to put the song of a Crosby chum into a picture. He had plenty of say in who made his movies and how they were made. So he must have liked what he was doing. As with his singing, so with his films: He found an attractive formula and stuck with it. You might see his devil-may-care smile as passivity or irony, a graceful going through the motions. Or you might say - and this isn't a war crime, just the underachieving of a consummate pro who could have pushed himself to do more - Crosby coasted.

This is one reason his films don't resonate today. They are too square for cult audiences, too straight for gay ones. In the auteur era, his list of directors looks tepid. He made no films with John Ford, Alfred Hitchcock, Howard Hawks, Preston Sturges; or, in the termite underground, with Edgar G. Ulmer or Edward D. Wood, Jr. At Paramount, his directors were deficient in edge and elegance. They also lack retrospective cachet. You will find no fan web sites devoted to Wesley Ruggles ("Sing You Sinners"), Norman Taurog ("Rhythm on the Range," "Road to Rio"), Eddie Sutherland ("Too Much Harmony") or Victor Schertzinger ("Rhythm on the River" and the first two "Road" movies). His one film with Billy Wilder, "The Emperor Waltz," is the most negligible of that esteemed farceur's career. . . .

Alas, neither Mercer nor Carmichael - nor Frank Loesser, another Paramount staff writer - ever became a regular contributor to the Crosby film-song repertoire. Instead, Bing stuck with his "Irish leprechaun" pal lyricist Johnny Burke and Burke's composing partners James

People") devoid of prejudice, where white people and black people went fishing together ("Gone Fishin'" with Louis Armstrong) and gathered, late in the day, at the local tavern in faded golf slacks to sing college songs ("The Whiffenpoof Song"), whether or not they went to college. And, though everyone lived in the San Fernando Valley, they dreamed of a White Christmas.

I can't explain or justify this strange fact, but I know every song on 10 Bing Crosby records better than I know the music of my own generation that I loved the most, Van Morrison's "St. Dominic's Preview" or the Stones' "Exile on Main Street." My father, though ravaged by Alzheimer's, died remembering every lyric of every song on them easier than he could remember the names of his grandchildren. I think he liked the Irish songs best. The rest of his family sang along with Perry Como and Vic Damone, but my father, an Italian kid from South Philadelphia, walked around the house crooning "Danny Boy" and "Too-Ra-Loo-Ra-Loo-Ral." I'd give the world if he could sing those songs to me today.

"Bing: A Musical Biography" was released in 1954. The cover painting shows a bodiless ghost dressed in sport shirt and checkered golf slacks sitting on a stool, with a pipe floating in the air and a golf club leaning against the ghost's knee and a brown felt hat on the imaginary head. In the background is a tiny racehorse; a microphone with the logo "Decca" hangs in front of the ghost. When I was born there were probably few Americans who couldn't have told you who that figure was supposed to represent; today, I doubt if one American in 20 could conjure up a scrap of information about the man whose voice, as the inscription on the inside case cover says, "has been heard by more people than the voice of any other human being who ever lived."

I don't know how that conclusion was arrived at, but surely no one in 1954 would have challenged it, and who has come along since then to replace him in the ears of the world? Put it this way: In 1934, Pu Yi, the boy emperor of China, the last inheritor of a 5,000-year civilization who spent most of his early life secluded in the Forbidden City, told a foreign journalist that, among other Western pleasures, he wanted to hear more Bing Crosby records. Who might he ask for today? Whoever VH1 is featuring this week?

It's probably impossible for anyone under 40 to truly understand that Bing Crosby was, in the words of his new biographer, Gary Giddins, "the most influential and successful popular performer in the first half of the 20th century." Late in his career, after Crosby more or less relinquished the adult portion of his potential audience to Sinatra, while the teenagers invariably went to rock 'n' roll, the kind of real, monumental popularity Bing Crosby had enjoyed ceased to exist. . .

It's a shame that "A Pocketful of Dreams" doesn't come with an accompanying CD so readers can put the book down and hear what Giddins is talking about. The more so because it is precisely the musical Bing Crosby who gets lost as the book goes on. The truth of the matter is that while Bing Crosby the artist and Bing Crosby the phenomenon are interesting subjects, Bing Crosby the man really isn't. Giddins has some interesting revelations to throw out - that Louis Armstrong introduced Bing to marijuana, which he later recommended to his oldest son as preferable to alcohol, that the ultraconservative Hollywood veteran opposed the Vietnam War, that Crosby's fabled friendship with Bob Hope didn't really begin till they had been working together for more than 20 years - but it seems as if there are at least a hundred pages between them. "A Pocketful of Dreams" moves at a crawl; after Page 163 Bing and his best friends are still relegated to Paul Whiteman's choir, and some readers may start wondering if he's ever going to get to be the Bing Crosby. Every letter to family is quoted in full, every radio introduction is repeated in its entirety. The overall effect of the ocean of detail is to make Bing Crosby seem not closer to us but more remote.

Was 700 pages really necessary to chronicle the life - excuse me - the first half of a life - of the man whose greatest achievement was making his art seem casual? Giddins' critical instincts about Crosby's music fail him as a biographer; the mountains of detail about taxes and diversified business interests and recording contracts only blur the image of a man who comes into focus with remarkable ease in his art.

I don't want to sound ungracious about a book that I devoured as if it were written for me, but I can't imagine who is going to read "A Pocketful of Dreams" as eagerly as I did. I'm still left without a way to introduce my friends to Bing Crosby, and I can only hope that, at the least, this book spurs a set of CDs, with notes by Gary Giddins.
(Allen Barra, salon.com, February 9)

Four men dominate the history of popular singing in the 20th century (if you want to double the number, throw in the Beatles). They were Al Jolson, Bing Crosby, Frank Sinatra and Elvis Presley, and during the period of their ascendancy they not only led the way, they were the way. We think we know them. Jolson, the cantor's son, headlining in blackface and ushering in the era of sound; Sinatra, the tough Italian kid from Hoboken who transformed himself into the revered Ol' Blue Eyes; Elvis, the hip-wriggling, dirt-poor truck driver from Tupelo whose life sputtered out so stupidly. But what do we know about Crosby? Throughout his decades at the absolute pinnacle of his profession, he was just Bing - decent, casual, modest, above all normal; a guy whose baritone voice happened to be better than ours or we could have been him. (We certainly never thought we could be Jolson or Sinatra or Presley.)

His reputation hasn't fared well. Today he may be admired by singers and critics, and remembered with respect and affection by those who go back 50 years, but he's generally brushed aside by younger people, who associate him with their parents' (or grandparents') old-fashioned taste. What's left of him? "White Christmas" and "Silent Night" during the holidays. Possibly the "Road" pictures. Less likely, his Oscar-winning Father O'Malley in (ugh) "Going My Way." Maybe "High Society." As for his life story, if it's known at all it's because of the pathetic death of his alcoholic first wife, Dixie, and the revelations of his son Gary's book, "Going My Own Way." The world's most successful singer, ever, is neglected as an artist, and Mr. All-Time Nice Guy has been turned into Daddy Dearest.

Years ago, the eminent jazz critic Gary Giddins set out to tell the full story of the life and to analyze and reassess

book eases into the mid-1930s. . . .

Only with the arrival of rock-and-roll did Crosby lose his grip on the national imagination. By the end of the 1960s he was an object of nostalgia or (depending on one's age) derision, a smooth-talking old trout selling orange juice on television. And to judge from a few simple benchmarks, his influence has continued to wane. In my local, profusely stocked Tower Records, Crosby gets less shelf space than his cardigan-sporting epigone Perry Como-less, even, than his underachieving kid brother Bob. The movies, once staples of late-night television, seem to have pulled a similar disappearing act. Has cultural amnesia done Crosby in for good?

To my own surprise, Giddins has made me doubt it. Thanks to Crosby's penchant for understatement and precision-tooled drollery, his best work has hardly aged a day, and even the worst of the Decca crapola is still ennobled by his perfect intonation and no-muss, no-fuss phrasing. What's more, his influence remains pervasive, even if it's not always visible. During his thirty-odd years in the public eye (and the public ear) Crosby came to embody for many what an American was supposed to be: decent but a trifle distant, good-humored and democratic and unflappable. And that persona has proved no less durable than his art, which should guarantee Crosby's survival well into the new millennium. Certainly it's hard to think otherwise after reading *A Pocketful of Dreams*. A formidable biographer and exegetical wonder, Gary Giddins is so persuasive that even the most skeptical post-Boomer should close this book with the eerie sensation that it's Bing's world after all-we just live in it.
(James Marcus, Atlantic Monthly, February)

Whatever became of Bing Crosby?

For a performer who dominated American entertainment for a big slice of the 20th century, Crosby has all but disappeared from the cultural radar screen. It's not unusual for pop culture icons to fade from view; late-night television is filled with the flickering images of stars long forgotten. But few figures who were so successful, and had so much impact on so many different aspects of American culture, have faded away so completely. Frank Sinatra, Elvis Presley, Louis Armstrong - all of whom were influenced by and owed some of their star status to Crosby - still wash over the public imagination. But except for Christmastime, when "White Christmas" gets taken out of mothballs along with other baubles of holidays past, Crosby doesn't seem to make so much as a ripple.

"I was talking to Rosemary Clooney," said author Gary Giddins, whose new Crosby biography is being published this month, "and she said, 'The ocean has just rolled over Bing. Why do you think that is?' "

Giddins' book, "Bing Crosby: A Pocketful of Dreams, the Early Years 1903-1940" (Little, Brown, $30), is an ambitious reclamation project for a subject who, during his lifetime, never seemed to need a boost. . . .

Crosby's artistry was obscured by his icon status, and that was partly by design. As Giddins notes in his biography, the crooner worked hard at making it look easy - and making it look easy became a central part of his image.

"Crosby just made it all go down like mother's milk," Giddins said. "It goes down easy."

Maybe too easy.

One reason Crosby may have faded from popular consciousness is he removed from his persona that edginess - a vital ingredient for the survival of any pop icon, argues Michael Marsden, provost and vice president of academic affairs and research at Eastern Kentucky University in Richmond, Ky.

"Human icons in American popular culture are either enigmatic, and therefore you can read anything into them, or they're mercurial - they have that darker side," said Marsden, a popular-culture scholar. Popular figures from Billy the Kid to Frank Sinatra have managed to stay in our consciousness because they're open to interpretation. The problem with Crosby, Marsden postulated, is he's not.

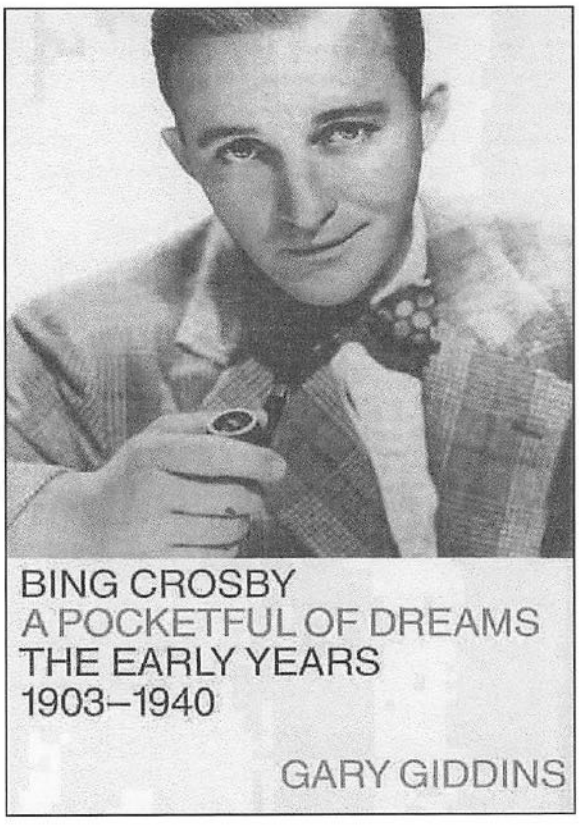
"He's simple, and therefore because he's simple, we put him out of our minds," Marsden said.
(Chris Foran, Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, January 21)

Gary Giddins has written a literary tour de force that redefines the pejorative genre ''show business biography'' and suggests the genre's potential as serious scholarship and even perhaps as art. It is the first of two volumes of what's likely to be the definitive biography of Bing Crosby, a blithe spirit who parlayed his voice, charm, and presence into his fortune. He became arguably the most influential white performer in the rise of American popular culture.

The book is a well-matched marriage of author with subject. Giddins's strength, besides a deceptively breezy, ingratiating, and fluid style, is in his perspective on Crosby. . . . The author of acclaimed biographies of Louis Armstrong and Charlie Parker, Giddins brilliantly deconstructs Crosby's voice, technique, and charm as a performer. The author personifies the elusive Crosby as, paradoxically, a casual and insouciant but carefully sculpted icon. His phenomenal success was accompanied by a cool, hip style and persona that infatuated his contemporaries, not only millions of fans of all stripes - he appealed to women and men alike - but friends and colleagues. For millions, Crosby's style palliated two painful historical eras, the Great Depression and World War II. As Giddins points out, Crosby is associated with Christmas as closely as are Charles Dickens and Santa Claus. . . .

''Bing Crosby'' is a compelling narrative of one of our most important and underrated historical figures, and it's a durable companion. You have to read the book to get to know him; maybe reread it. It's that good.
(Bruce McCabe, Boston Globe, January 21)

The box sits in the corner of my record case, unopened for at least three decades. A collector once offered me $500 for it. The songs on the 10 records in the case - "Pennies From Heaven," "Sweet Leilani," "Moonlight Becomes You," "San Fernando Valley," "Mexicali Rose," "Swinging on a Star" and, of course, "White Christmas" - were probably the most popular songs of their time. They survive today as artifacts of a past still strongly felt but dimly remembered. I never knew this past, nor did I ever see the America for which Bing Crosby still serves as an avatar, but I have a vague nostalgia for it. It was an America of small towns ("Dear Hearts and Gentle



Why read a long book about Bing Crosby? And especially one that covers the part of his life that most would agree was eclipsed by the glory of his later years?

One answer lies on Page 246 of *Bing Crosby: A Pocketful of Dreams, The Early Years 1903-1940.* "Bing would continue to average sixteen charted singles per year through 1950, peaking in 1939 with 27 (a feat broken only by the Beatles in 1964 with 30), never falling below double digits until 1951, when he placed nine singles in the top 25. This unparalleled 25-year accomplishment is not likely ever to be equaled." Take that, Eminem.

Another lies on Page 266:

"Crosby was a man whom the audience thought it knew almost as well as a member of the family but who was, in fact, known to very few. Cool and efficient in his private manner, he was . . . exceptionally intimate when he sang. He never bellowed. . . . We liked his easiness, the intelligence behind his interpretation of the lyrics. Everything he did depended upon intelligence and he certainly had that." And finally, this 1947 quote from actor Jose Ferrer on Page 533:

"Al Jolson was like Mr. Great Singer of all time. Maurice Chevalier was like Mr. Entertainer of all time. Frank Sinatra is like Mr. Balladeer of all time. But Bing Crosby is like Mr. Everything of all time." The 20th century is expired no matter how you count the years, and as the generations pass, there is the possibility that the mark made by Harry Lillis Crosby will be reduced to a footnote. Hence, 720 pages about Crosby might turn out to be not enough. . . .

Author Gary Giddins gives an unusually detailed look at a life that was thought to be highly public but that was also artfully concealed and hence private.

(John Smyntek, Knight Ridder News Service reproduced in Salt Lake Tribune, The Detroit Free Press and the Ottawa Citizen amongst others)

Gary Giddins may be the best thing to happen to Bing Crosby since Bob Hope. Somewhere along the way a lot of people who should know better have forgotten Crosby's place in American popular music. From the early 1930s into the late 1950s, he was the most commanding personality in show business, dominating movies, records and radio. No entertainer in history has reached so many so often for so long. Through the new technologies of network broadcasting, electric recording and talking films, Crosby became the coalescing figure in the creation of the first national popular culture and the matrix for all who followed.

Yet by the end of the 20th century, as the rush was on to anoint the icons of the 1900s, Crosby had faded to something close to a footnote. A culture that now celebrates a tribal diversity and pampers its political sensitivities just didn't know what to make of a singer whom everybody liked.

But Mr. Giddins knows, and Crosby couldn't have hoped for a finer biographer: elegant writer, informed historian, thorough scholar and one of America's most eminent jazz critics. Maybe this accounts for the buzz surrounding Mr. Giddins's "Bing Crosby: A Pocketful of Dreams, The Early Years 1903-1940." He has produced that rarest of all show-business bios, one that portrays its subject in a balanced way much as we remember him. Twenty years ago a book titled "Bing Crosby: The Hollow Man" took Crosby apart limb from limb. But Mr. Giddins is far too smart to become defensive. He digs beneath the fabrications, rips away the masks, and finds - sorry folks - an essentially OK guy, not a backstage backstabber...

(John McDonough, Wall Street Journal, January 26)

Is this the right moment to inaugurate a huge double-decker biography of Bing Crosby? Since his death, in 1977 (which took place, appropriately enough, on a golf course, where the seventy-four-year-old crooner had just shot a very creditable 85), his reputation has gone into eclipse. He hasn't, to be sure, vanished from the cultural map. Yet Crosby increasingly seems like the sole inhabitant of a kind of white-bread Mount Rushmore. He's not hip or sexy or tortured enough to rise from the show-biz ashes in the manner of, say, Tony Bennett (who, happily, lived long enough to enjoy his own resurrection).

In the superb *Bing Crosby: A Pocketful of Dreams,* Gary Giddins is quick to acknowledge his subject's dwindling mystique - the result, he argues, "of having played Everyman too long and too well." But Giddins also makes a strong case for Crosby as the prime mover of American pop culture, who shaped it in his own affable image for more than three decades. . . .

This kind of formulation-knowing, nervy, and (to use a much maligned word) judgmental is Giddins's stock-in-trade. Indeed, the only weak patches in *A Pocketful of Dreams* occur in the first hundred pages or so, when Crosby hasn't yet begun his career and there's nothing to be judgmental about. Delivering his history of greater Spokane, the author sometimes lapses into what reads like a superior chamber-of-commerce brochure. But everywhere else he displays his phenomenal smart and critical acumen, and both qualities get a workout as the

most admired man alive in a national poll in the late 1940s - ahead of Gen. Dwight Eisenhower, Jackie Robinson and the Pope. This makes his disappearance from America's cultural radar all the more puzzling. While he was writing the book, Giddins contacted both Columbia and MCA records (the latter bought Decca, Bing's label) to gauge their interest in releasing a CD to coincide with publication. Both declined, one executive telling Giddins that "doing a Crosby CD was too 'inside baseball.'"

Recounting the story, Giddins could only sigh: "The man sold 400 million records by 1980!"

Articles about Bing's Pro-Am Golf Tournament and his Bay Area connections followed together with a nice review of Bing's film career by Mick LaSalle, the Chronicle's movie critic.

Every era has two histories - history as it happened and history as it is remembered. Today, when people think of the biggest stars of the 1940s, names such as Bogart and Bacall, Bette Davis and Joan Crawford come to mind. But go back and check the numbers. The statistics, year by year, make one fact plain: The biggest movie star of the '40s was none other than Bing Crosby.

That's right. The mellow guy with the ears, who did the orange juice commercials in the '60s - and whose Christmas special was always a bit better than Andy Williams', because at least Bing sang "White Christmas." He could share the screen with Louis Armstrong in the 1930s and with David Bowie in the 1970s (singing "The Little Drummer Boy" on a Christmas special) and look perfectly at home in both settings. Bing was cool. How cool? Cary Grant cool. Mick Jagger cool. Frank Sinatra was a nervous wreck in comparison. A century has just ended: Bing Crosby was one of the coolest things in it. . .

When we revisit Crosby's films, his ease and grace are still effective, even after decades of Crosby imitators and with the Crosby style so much a part of Americana that it has become a cliché. Yet imagine how he must have seemed in 1931, just a couple of years removed from the love-me-or-I'll-die antics of Al Jolson, the 1920s version of the great entertainer. Crosby was a revolutionary, virtually the prototype for a new kind of manhood. He was the Beatles on Ed Sullivan. . . .

His popularity slipped a bit in the 1950s, but he had a few good ones left in him: Frank Capra's "Here Comes the Groom" (1951) with Jane Wyman, the corny but cozy "White Christmas" (1954) with Danny Kaye and "The Country Girl" (1954) with Grace Kelly. "The Country Girl" was his last important film. It was also his best. His performance as an alcoholic singer, a pathetic figure, was mesmerizing and in another year might have earned him the Oscar. He was certainly a contender, but he lost that year to Marlon Brando in "On the Waterfront."

Mick LaSalle

(E-mail Mick LaSalle at mlasalle@sfchronicle.com.)

Well, I accepted the invitation and duly e-mailed Mr. LaSalle as follows:

Loved your article. It's good that people are starting to recognise the status that Bing achieved. In modern terms, it's like, say, Tom Hanks (an Academy Award winner and top box office star) being also the top vocalist in the country and also having a top TV show at the same time. It was radio in Bing's case of course, but in the 1940s he was literally top at the cinema box office, top on records and top radio star. Unprecedented! By the way, 'High Society' was a pretty good film too!

Malcolm Macfarlane
Editor - BING magazine

Yes, the San Francisco Chronicle really did us and Gary Giddins proud. Extracts from just a few of the many other reviews we saw follow:

Giddins' biography is quite a contrast to two previous books about Bing: *The Hollow Man* by Shepherd and Slatzer and *Going My Own Way* by Gary Crosby. These books clearly had an axe to grind, and to boost sales they labored to create a tabloid contrast to the public persona of Bing. These were fundamentally exploitive books meant more to shock than to enlighten. Giddins, on the other hand, is no hatchet man, but a respected scholar who focuses most of his attention on Bing's development as an artist and the impact of his art on western culture.

And what an impact! We have been conditioned by the model of a rock-or-rap star who scores a couple of hit albums, dies from a drug overdose or bullet and gets immortalized in a 2-hour prime-time cable-channel biography. Bing Crosby, on the other hand, became the first and most successful multimedia superstar, dominating American music, movies and broadcasting for more than a quarter of a century. In his spare time he beneficially affected the evolution of race relations, technology, sporting life and charitable fund-raising. He triumphed over his demons and left this world a far better place in numerous ways for having lived.

Giddins' book most likely will be remembered as the definitive biography of the first half of Bing's life. . . . Working against Giddins' book is the cultural evolution of the past half century that has left Bing widely viewed as a Model T in the jet age. The products of Bing's artistry at his peak are mostly in black-and-white and monophonic. We may enjoy - even yearn for - snow at Christmas, but few people would tolerate it year round. So for the masses today Bing has been relegated largely to quaint holiday celebrations, leaving to historians and other transcenders of culture to ponder his enormous and unprecedented influence on the people who survived the Great Depression and beat the fascists.

(Steven Lewis, Bing Crosby Internet Museum)

World War II was under way. A record-breaking 181,000 fans turned out to hear Bing sing "East Side of Heaven," "El Rancho Grande" and - for the first time most of us had heard it - "God Bless America."

Well, actually the Golden Gate concert was October 8, 1939 but this minor detail apart, Mr. Elwood's article is professional and fair. Subsequent articles in the San Francisco Chronicle coverage also review Gary's book and here is a brief extract from the piece by Jesse Hamlin.

"If you took the Rolling Stones, Madonna and Britney Spears and put them together they wouldn't be as big as Bing Crosby was," says Tony Bennett, the great jazz-based vocalist who calls himself a Bing Crosby singer. "Bing and Louis Armstrong created the musical style of our time. It was all about relaxing and just being a good neighbor."

That's part of the engaging story Giddins tells in "Pocketful of Dreams," the first of a two-volume tome on the man the Germans lovingly called Der Bingle even as they waged war against his country. The arrival of Giddins' book, along with a new Bing TV bio that aired Christmas day on Bravo, has stirred interest in the enigmatic figure Giddins calls "the most influential and successful performer in the first half of the 20th century."

. . . .In his later years, when he was living in Hillsborough with his second wife, Kathryn Grant, and their three children, Crosby could be seen strolling the streets of San Francisco alone, offering a friendly hello to any and all, then moving on.

"For one of the most public men in the world he was strangely private without ever being rude," Chronicle columnist Herb Caen wrote about Crosby, with whom he'd been friendly for years "without really knowing him." Caen recalled the time he asked Crosby about Armstrong's remark that despite all the years he and Bing had been friends and worked together, the crooner never invited him to his home. Crosby, Caen wrote, "sucked on his pipe for a long moment and drawled, 'I have a lot of good friends who've never been in my house. You, for instance.' Then he sauntered on with an enigmatic grin."

Next came an article by Heidi Benson.

But what most people remember about Crosby is this: "White Christmas," the Bob Hope movies, the orange juice commercials, Crosby family specials on TV and his son Gary Crosby's "Daddy Dearest" memoir, "Going My Own Way."

Giddins acknowledges the truth in the accusations: "He did believe in corporal punishment. But I have at least a dozen magazine articles from the 1950s in which Bing says how much he regrets hitting his kids. He said if he was bringing up a family now he would not do that, but that's the way he was raised." By the time Gary Crosby's book came out in 1983, the only Bing Crosby records that were routinely reissued were the Christmas records. "His reputation just kind of fell apart," Giddins said. Most of the high points of Crosby's musical career - "Home on the Range," "The One Rose," "Mexicali Rose" - weren't then and aren't now in record stores. "Because they're unavailable, people don't know them," Giddins said. "With every kind of art, each generation has to rediscover it. That's what I hope to do with this book - to get people to go back and rediscover the music."

Giddins wasn't always such a believer. When his agent told him no one had ever done a serious book on Crosby and suggested that Giddins write a biography, he flatly refused. He was determined to write the big book he'd been wanting to do all his life on Duke Ellington. But when the Ellington archives were given to the Smithsonian Institution and embargoed for inventory - with another writer in the wings planning just such a biography - Giddins reconsidered. And as he dived into the Crosby material, he became more and more intrigued by the man people had written off as "a real son of a bitch."

"I assumed he was as vile a character as he'd been made out to be," Giddins said. "And I thought this would be an interesting book, to write about somebody who is privately unknowable, aloof, difficult, even mean, but who publicly gives off tremendous warmth and the illusion of being everybody's neighbor, everybody's best friend."

As Giddins started researching, however, Crosby won him over. "I found myself liking him more and more," he said. "And virtually everybody I spoke to just adored him." He wondered if he was talking to the wrong people. But the more digging he did, the more he found to admire. "I thought he really handled himself extremely well in very difficult situations.". . . .

In fact, Giddins is convinced that Crosby's education is one of the keys to understanding him. "That's one of the reasons I spent so much more time writing the high school and college passages than any other part of the book," he said. "It became a joke among my friends: 'Has Bing graduated college yet?' I spent as much time writing that as he spent in college. "But I absolutely believe it's key. He's the only major figure in popular music who had a classical education. Most of them never went to college, never graduated high school. But here's a guy who was very smart, very well read, who grew up participating in debating societies and winning prizes for recitations. He had an extraordinary intelligence in reading a lyric and just instinctively knew how to tell the story of the lyric."

Perhaps as important, Crosby was smart about his career. Frank Sinatra, whose relationship with Crosby will play a big role in Giddins' second volume, has cited two ways that he was influenced by Crosby: Crosby was the first singer who actually read the words in lyrics, and he engineered his own career. Crosby was the first to do it all, and Sinatra specifically built the same game plan. "He followed him, step by step," said Giddins - from singing with a big band to performing as a solo artist, making recordings, then going to Hollywood and becoming a movie star.

With all that cross-media traction, plus the exceptional popularity of radio shows broadcast to the military throughout World War II, Crosby was voted the

wanted to mother him, and men wanted to hang out with him. He had many pals but few intimates; the sudden death in 1933 of the guitarist Eddie Lang, with whom he had a deep musical and personal affinity, seems to have hardened him, "and he never allowed anyone else to get as close." This seems to have included his first wife, Dixie Lee:

"That they deeply loved each other no one doubted. But though the marriage blossomed for the better part of a decade, publicly extolled as a fairy-tale romance, the story of Bing and Dixie is not a happy one. In the shorthand of Hollywood mythology, Dixie began drinking to keep up with Bing, then put her foot down and forced him to quit. As a result, his career took off while hers disappeared. As insecure as Bing was confident, Dixie was not ungrateful to escape the limelight, but by then her own drinking had gotten out of hand. Warning signs were apparent long before they tied the knot."

That is about as far inside the marriage as Giddins is able to get. It is not clear whether this is because the sons of Bing and Dixie aren't talking or because the private aspects of Crosby's life interest Giddins less than the public ones. There is some reason to believe that the latter is the case, since he devotes more space than necessary to descriptions and evaluations of obscure Crosby recordings and films. The enterprise he displays in these endeavors is admirable, but the book could have been pruned by as much as 200 pages and would have lost little of consequence.

Bing and Dixie enjoy a happy day at the races.

On the important matters, though, Giddins gets it right. While it is always interesting to learn where the public man and the private man connect and disconnect, it is the former upon whom the biographer properly focuses, for it is the public life that justifies the biography in the first place. As the passages quoted above should make abundantly clear, Giddins has a keen understanding of who Bing Crosby was, how he got that way, and why he was so widely, gratefully loved. I await his second volume with eager expectation.

I e-mailed Mr. Yardley to thank him for what was a comprehensive and basically fair review. I also e-mailed the San Francisco Chronicle because they really did excel themselves with over eight pages of coverage about Bing in general and Gary's book in particular in their Datebook section. Charlie Baillie kindly copied the pages for me and Les Wilson (via Les Brice) also sent in the whole Datebook supplement. The first page contained a review by Philip Elwood the Chronicle's jazz critic.

Crosby's eight-year transition from half of a 1927 vaudeville team to the world's most popular radio, recording and movie star, consumes the middle 13 chapters (more than half the text) in Gary Giddins' enormous new book, "Bing Crosby: A Pocketful of Dreams - The Early Years, 1903-1940." In the first few chapters of this 728-page volume, Giddins' focus is as much on American social history as it is specifically on the boyhood of Harry Lillis Crosby Jr. . . .

Giddins' fascination with the environment from which artists emerge enhances all his writings - read "Satchmo," for example, or note his contributions to Ken Burns' "Jazz" series. This "Bing Crosby" volume is no exception. Giddins follows Bing around on his paper routes, vividly notes his boyhood enthusiasm for his father's new Edison cylinder phonograph, imagines the Crosby family's Sunday songfests at home and chronicles Bing's growth as a singer, athlete (no golf yet) and showman. . . .

Giddins covers Bing's fabulous ascendancy to stardom from 1927-35 brilliantly. . .The final six chapters of the book emphasize Bing's movies (14 between 1937 and 1940), the prewar "Kraft Music Hall" broadcasts, his horse-racing and golf enthusiasms, his cronies and associates. Giddins' ardor for films, radio and recordings - and his determination to cover as much of Bing's life as possible - converts many of the book's closing 200 pages into rather lifeless annotated precursors to the useful filmography and discography included afterward. But behind-the-scenes tales of the radio shows and films (especially "The Road to Singapore"), coverage of Bing's prewar family life, his friendships, his distant manner and his business practices, also find their way into these final chapters.

Many Bay Area old-timers may become misty-eyed when they find Giddins' reference to one of Bing's few public concerts in the late 1930s. It was held outdoors at the Golden Gate International Exposition's "Temple Compound" on Treasure Island Sept. 3, 1939. It was Labor Day weekend, the last days of the exposition, and it was also the last weekend of "peace in our times." Germany had invaded Poland,

Deirdre Donahue of *USA TODAY* had a view which may well be true of the average "man-in-the-street.":

> Even the extensive title on the cover of this impressive new biography illuminates both its strengths and its weaknesses. *Bing Crosby: A Pocketful of Dreams, The Early Years: 1903-1940* has zero in common with the typical show-biz bio, heavy on the personal, light on the gifts that propelled the artist to stardom in the first place. (Kitty Kelley's biography of Frank Sinatra, for example, offers no insights into his music.). . .
>
> One of the best aspects of Giddins' approach is his ability to place Crosby in terms of his time, both historically and musically. The book is an education in terms of popular music. (It dovetails nicely with Ken Burns' Jazz.).
>
> For the jazz aficionado and the Crosby fanatic, this book will be high clover. But for the lay reader, it's almost too much. Each song with its particular nuances is explored, every single turn of his career analyzed, every musician is mentioned, every film is detailed. Clearly, Giddins is writing the definitive biography for the ages, but for the mildly interested, the result can be a bit overwhelming.

Paige Smoron of the Chicago Sun-Times prefers to believe the 'Hollow Man' stories rather than Gary's own in-depth evaluation as he (or she?) dashes off the following shallow comments in the January 21 edition:

> There's a story to every song, and Giddins is a painstaking but graceful writer. He doesn't just name-drop characters, but introduces them properly and politely. He steps in to offer some perspective, then exits stage left. The way he writes about music, you can not only hear but see Crosby's mordant trademark, the Celtic wavering in his voice that "suggests a mournful cry."
>
> More casual readers will find themselves skimming over some of the business details to get to the good stuff: Crosby's naughty youth. While Giddins makes it clear that Crosby's "What, me worry?" persona was an invention, Bing's childhood fits right into the mythology. His father was easygoing and often unemployed; his mother was cold, religious and ambitious. From the beginning, Crosby seemed to "fall upward" into success, singing in school productions, studying law in college. . . .
>
> Bing was blessed in more ways than one. Somehow he managed to land a gig with the Paul Whiteman Orchestra, make his way into Mack Sennett shorts, and become a radio legend - all with a hangover. . . .
>
> Giddins doesn't speculate much about Crosby's personal life. In fact, he can barely bring himself to acknowledge the allegations. Bing's oldest son, Gary, wrote a 1983 daddy-dearest book, *Going My Own Way*, in which he describes Bing beating him with a metal-studded belt until he drew blood. Giddins sums it up dismissively as "a resentful memoir by his alcoholic eldest son, Gary," and begrudgingly refers to Bing's "problems dealing with his sons." Bing would have been proud of the understatement.
>
> Do professional achievements make up for personal shortcomings? Giddins answers that question by avoiding it altogether. His biography is important and enjoyable, but empty, as it seems his subject was.

Poor stuff, and unrepresentative of most of the reviews. Janet Maslin, in the New York Times of February 1, did not appreciate the fine detail of Gary's book.

> In his data-packed, tirelessly adulatory biography of Bing Crosby, Gary Giddins often tells his readers more than they need to know. Take Crosby's "odd name, which eclipsed cultural divisions with its unmistakably North American yet faintly Asian (the open-mouthed aw surrounded by two grin-making ees) arrangement of consonants and vowels." Take the endless dense, technical analyses of vocal renditions, which make long portions of the book sound like liner notes. Or take the footnoted factoid that a $5 breakage deposit was required at Gonzaga University in Spokane, Wash., in 1920, when the golden-throated Harry Lillis Crosby was a student there. . . .
>
> Mr. Giddins, whose authoritativeness is his greatest strength, does not share with biographers of Elvis Presley or Frank Sinatra the automatic assumption of a reader's pulse-quickening recollection of his subject's matinee-idol status. Reinstating Crosby is his initial mission, and in that regard he sounds overzealous, especially when making invidious Crosby-Sinatra comparisons that diminish Sinatra.
>
> The same spirit of boosterism leads him to dismiss earlier biographers' claims that Crosby was alcoholic, politically reactionary or ill-tempered. Instead, Mr. Giddins, who shows little affinity for interesting anecdotes in any case, leans toward recollections like the acquaintance who says he can still remember "Bing when he'd walk in and holler, 'Give me a couple of greasy hamburgers and a malted milk." Genial drinking stories from the early years, like the time Bing fell off the bandstand, have much the same innocent tone. . . .
>
> But what really needs to be seen here is the man Artie Shaw described when he said, "The thing you have to understand about Bing Crosby is that he was the first hip white person born in the United States," a statement printed compellingly on the book's back cover. There's plenty of evidence to bear that out. If only Mr. Giddins had made it sing.

As can be seen, it will take years of hard work to overcome the damage done by the 'Hollow Man' books of the 1980s but Gary is certainly doing his best. Jonathan Yardley of the Washington Post was one who understood the message that Gary is putting over and his enthusiastic review finishes:

> Women found him attractive, and so did men; women

BING'S FILMS ON TELEVISION

Only a few of Bing's films have appeared on the national cable television networks in the United States in recent months. Here is the list of those which were shown during this period:

December 2000

A CONNECTICUT YANKEE IN KING ARTHUR'S COURT - THE BELLS OF ST. MARY'S - THE COUNTRY GIRL - GOING HOLLYWOOD - HIGH SOCIETY - HOLIDAY INN - WHITE CHRISTMAS

January 2001

THE COUNTRY GIRL - ROAD TO BALI - ROAD TO RIO - ROBIN AND THE SEVEN HOODS - TOP O' THE MORNING

February 2001

HIGH SOCIETY - SON OF PALEFACE - TOP O' THE MORNING

I guess that's about all the news from this side of the Atlantic until time for the next issue of BING in the summer.

F. B. (Wig) Wiggins
March 5, 2001

Bing Crosby: A Pocketful of Dreams - The Early Years, 1903-1940

As Wig has said, the publicity generated by the new book from Gary Giddins has been nothing less than extraordinary with many newspapers reviewing the book and Gary being interviewed on numerous occasions. Gary had been prominent in a PBS series about jazz and he was able to build on this nicely to obtain attention for his marvellous tome. We could fill up two whole editions of BING if we reproduced all of the coverage and we make no apology for the extensive extracts that now follow.

We were able to include our own first impressions of the book in our last issue and very soon this was followed by a review by the *Library Journal*.

> Here, Giddins, the author of biographies on Charlie Parker and Louis Armstrong and winner of the 1998 National Book Critics Circle Award for *Visions of Jazz*, has created a detailed, finely documented, and fascinating account of the early career of one of America's leading entertainers of the 20th century. Written with access to rare, unpublished materials, this lengthy work chronicles Crosby's life as well as his singing, recording, radio, and film careers up to 1940, the year of the first of his popular "Road" movies with Bob Hope.
>
> Giddins not only corrects a number of popular biographical misconceptions about Crosby but also presents a well-reasoned argument for viewing the singer as a figure of prime importance in the early development of vocal jazz - a contribution later obscured by Crosby's work as a ballad singer and film star. Musicians, fans of popular American song, and film buffs will greatly value this thoughtful critical analysis of Crosby's work in virtually all fields of America's entertainment industry of the 1920s and 1930s. Highly recommended for all libraries.

A nice start and then we start to move into the big-time as the major USA papers consider the book. *The Los Angeles Times* of January 28 carried a review by Richard M. Sudhalter who is known to us as a biographer of Bix Beiderbecke and whilst he fusses over what he considers minor errors, his comments are, overall, very favourable.

> As Gary Giddins points out in "Bing Crosby: A Pocketful of Dreams," the meticulously researched first volume of his two-part Crosby biography, Bing wasn't quite alone in exploring the microphone's potential. But his easy virility somehow made such early stars as Gene Austin, Rudy Vallee and other "crooners" sound androgynously insubstantial, even epicene. With neither strain nor sense of portent, Crosby changed popular singing forever, opening a brand-new future to generations yet unborn, performers who may never in their lifetimes know or hear his name.
>
> Giddins has done his work diligently, cutting through the encrustation of myth and press-agentry surrounding Crosby in - and since - his lifetime, bringing welcome clarity to his rise as a singer, radio personality and movie actor and mapping his personal life with admirable objectivity. . . .
>
> In the end, this half of "A Pocketful of Dreams" never quite addresses the stubborn question of how Bing Crosby's immense fame could have evaporated so quickly and completely after his death. Apart from "White Christmas," his name and voice are conspicuously absent, for example, from National Public Radio's "NPR One Hundred," billed by the network as "the hundred most important American musical works of the 20th century." Evaluating the "entertainers of the century" for their 1999 year-end issues, neither Time nor Newsweek mentioned Crosby except in passing.
>
> Is it simply, as columnist Nick Clooney and others have reasoned, that Bing made his mark and departed too early for the relentlessly solipsistic boomer generation to have taken much note? Or is Giddins right in suggesting that such evanescence was "the cost of having played Everyman too long and too well?" For now, at least, the mystery persists, awaiting Vol. 2.
>
> In the meantime, let's hearken well to Giddins when he declares that Bing Crosby's was "the voice of the nation, the cannily informal personification of hometown decency - friendly, unassuming, melodious, irrefutably American." Or just put "Make Believe" back on the turntable, drop the tone arm (it has to be a tone arm) into place and be astonished yet again by this daring, dazzling young man who challenged the world on his own terms and triumphed so hearteningly, and lastingly, well.

other ICC members, and to Laura for her dedicated transcription efforts.

NEW BING CROSBY DISCOGRAPHY

As I mentioned previously in BING 125, I have been working closely with leading American Crosby collectors Ken Gray of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and Howard Levine of Coral Springs, Florida to compile a new discography of Bing's commercial recordings.

With advice and assistance from Jim Reilly, who has been working hard to computerize all of the data for publication, this project is nearing completion at long last. I hope to be able to announce a specific publication date for the completed discography in the next issue of BING, and to provide ordering details for those ICC members who would like to purchase copies.

The discography will include complete information on each of Bing's commercially-released studio recordings in tabular form, together with selected illustrations and narrative descriptions of various highlights from Bing's recording career. Depending on the size chosen for the book, the discography should run between 75 and 100 pages.

Two unique features of this discography will be a listing of the original commercial record number for each song, and information indicating which songs are available on compact disc, including the country of origin of each relevant CD. When published, this up-to-date discography should provide a detailed, but easy-to-use guide to all of Bing's commercial recordings, the kind of reference work that Crosby collectors have been seeking for many years.

To give everyone a clearer idea of the planned format for this forthcoming discography, sample entries for the years 1926 and 1927 are shown below for further information.

The Studio Recordings

	Song Titles, Songwriters and Accompanists	*Matrix And Take Number*	*Original Commercial Release*	*Compact Disc*	
	1926				
Oct 18	***I've Got The Girl*** (Donaldson) Don Clark & His Los Angeles Biltmore Hotel Orchestra w Al Rinker	W142785-3	Co 824-D	JZCD-1	1
Dec 22	***Wistful And Blue*** (Etting - Davidson) Paul Whiteman & His Orchestra w Al Rinker	BVE37285-4	Vi 20418	JZCD-1	2
Dec 22	***Pretty Lips*** (Straight - Donaldson) Paul Whiteman & His Orchestra w Al Rinker	BVE37286-1	CBC 1-004	JZCD-1	3
	1927				
Feb 10	***Shanghai Dream Man*** (Davis - Akst) Paul Whiteman & His Orchestra w Jack Fulton, Charles Gaylord, Al Rinker & Austin Young	BVE37764-4	Vi 20683	JZCD-1	4
Feb 25	***That Saxophone Waltz*** (Mingo - Sisk) Paul Whiteman & His Orchestra w Fulton, Gaylord, Rinker, Young	BVE38118-3	Vi 20513	JZCD-1	5
Feb 28	***Pretty Lips*** (Straight - Donaldson) Paul Whiteman & His Orchestra w Al Rinker	BVE38124-1	Vi 20627	JZCD-1	6

BING'S NORTHWEST HOLIDAY RECORDS

Over the years, some Crosby discographies have referred to a promotional disc reportedly entitled "Holiday In Washington" which was issued in 1966 by the Pacific Northwest Bell Telephone Company. Bing was said to have joined other entertainment personalities to speak about the virtues of his home state of Washington on this limited distribution long play promotional record.

Thanks to assistance from my good friend and leading American collector, Ken Gray of Pittsburgh, I am pleased to be able to report additional information about this rare recording, and to advise Crosby collectors that there actually are two such discs, not one, both of which are in Ken Gray's outstanding collection.

The first disc is entitled "Oregon Holiday", which has rarely been mentioned in any Crosby publication. The second is entitled "Washington Holiday" (not "Holiday In Washington" as previously reported). Both discs are 7 inch LPs, with black labels and silver lettering, and are unnumbered. The two sides of the Oregon disc carry matrix numbers TAD-2403-RE and TAD-2404-RE, while the Washington disc shows TAD-2405-RE and TAD-2406-RE.

The two discs contain obviously pre-taped contributions from different personalities discussing the attractions of the two Pacific Northwest states, linked by comments from producer Murray Morgan. Also included are various sound effects from area attractions. On the "Oregon Holiday" disc, Bing is joined by Mel Blanc and Jane Powell, while "Washington Holiday" includes Martha Wright and Patrice Munsel.

Bing's narration (he does not sing) is on side one of "Oregon Holiday" (TAD-2403-RE), and side two of "Washington Holiday" (TAD-2406-RE). The interesting fact that becomes obvious on listening to the two discs is that Bing's contributions are almost exactly the same on both, with only a few words of difference. Bing mentions Oregon only by name on the first disc, while on the second he adds that he "was a kid around Spokane and Tacoma" and comments on "the green fairways that abound in Seattle, Tacoma and Everett" and praises the "bouncy blare of the Seattle Sea Fair". It appears certain that Bing taped both of his tributes back-to-back in one session, as his voice cadences and inflections are exactly the same for both readings.

In 1967, Bing also narrated a short promotional film entitled "Bing Crosby's Washington State", which was shown on television in Washington, and in theaters elsewhere in the United States. Although similar in purpose and content to the two 7 inch LPs issued by Pacific Northwest Bell, Bing's contributions to the film soundtrack were different and were recorded separately.

Would you like to know what Bing actually had to say about the attractions of his native state of Washington, and its neighbor Oregon? These are Der Bingle's own words about Washington, as painstakingly transcribed from Ken Gray's 7 inch LP by my wife, Laura, for publication here:

Washington Holiday

"I like to remember the Pacific Northwest as a land that can put a song in your heart. You know, when I was a kid around Spokane and Tacoma, the song was usually carried in a sort of an off-key whistle-ah-through one of my missing teeth. Which made the notes, of course, a little on the reedy side, the kind you would squeeze out of a freckled clarinet. But there was also some great counter- point from the wind whistling through the evergreens or a paddle dipping in a lake. Since then, I have been drawn back to my Pacific Northwest by some more robust sounds. You know, like the thrashing of a hooked trout and the bouncy blare of the Seattle Sea Fair. And the smack of a ball heading down some of those cool, green fairways that abound in Seattle, Tacoma and Everett. You know, I used to play one course up there with a Hollywood friend of mine, but Bob took so many divots, they finally put a sign on the gate: "Abandon all hope, you who enter here." He was hopeless! Anyhow, if you'd rather swing on a star (and I just did), or gather moonbeams in a jar, you can really be better off than you are by hitting the road to the Pacific Northwest. Oh, it's a great way to discover America!"

My thanks to Ken Gray for sharing these two rare examples of Bing's promotional recordings with

achievements have also been featured in other articles which accompany the book reviews. All in all, this has been an outpouring of the kind of attention that Bing never receives in this day and age. And it has clearly shown that there are journalists all across the United States who thoroughly enjoy writing about Bing when they are given a reason to do so.

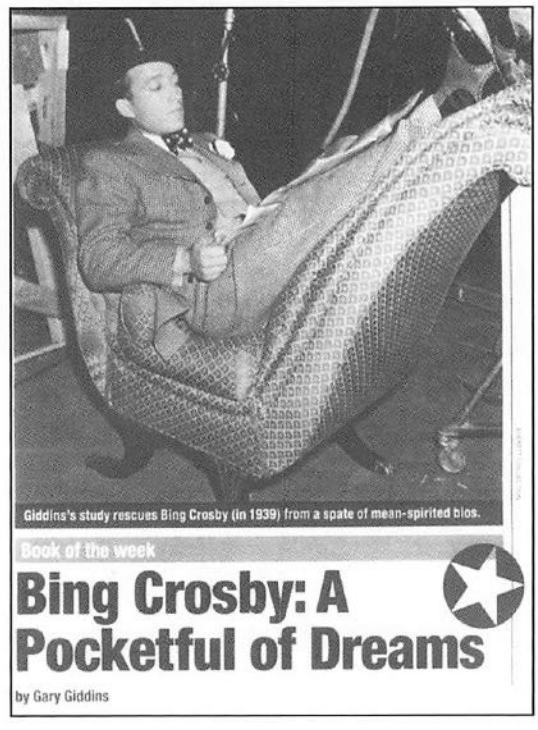
I would like to take this opportunity to thank the many ICC members who have sent me book reviews and other articles about Bing from their local newspapers, and to express my personal appreciation for their thoughtfulness in this regard. My only regret is that it is not possible to reprint the full text of each of them in BING for everyone to enjoy. But I am afraid we would need a special issue of the magazine to contain them all.

Just to mention a few of the more impressive articles about Bing, and Gary Giddins' book, that I have received, there have been several in the *New York Times* and other New York newspapers, and others in the *Boston Globe*, the *Washington Post*, the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, the *Chicago Sun-Times* and the *Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel*. Several West Coast newspapers have featured outstanding coverage, with prominent photographs and extensive articles about Bing's career, including the *San Francisco Chronicle*, the *Portland Oregonian*, the *Seattle Times* and the *Spokane Spokesman-Review*. As ICC members will remember, Bing used to deliver the Spokane Spokesman-Review as one of his many part-time jobs when he was growing up.

Other favorable reviews have appeared in magazines such as the *Atlantic Monthly, People, Publisher's Weekly* and *Time*.

Here is just a selection of some of the more interesting references to Gary Giddins' biography from leading American publications:
"Bing, the Influential Everyman of Music" (Boston Globe) "Bing Crosby, the Voice of America" (Washington Post) "Bing Crosby, the Unsung King of Song" (New York Times)
"Bing Crosby, Comfortably Going His Way" (New York Daily News)
"Bing Crosby's Biography Hits All the Notes, Meticulously" (USA Today)
"Polishing the Tarnished Icon: Bing Crosby, Totem of Cool" (New York Observer)
"Bing Crosby, the True Life of a Crooner" (Publisher's Weekly)
"Birth of the Cool: Bing Crosby was once a Swinging Young Hepcat From Spokane" (Portland Oregonian) "Ba-da-Bing! A New Biography Brings Renewed Respect for Crosby as Singer, Actor and Human Being" (San Francisco Chronicle)

All in all, we can only be grateful for so much "good news" about Bing. Those American ICC members who have not yet obtained a copy of "A Pocketful of Dreams" should find one at their local bookstores. With a list price of $30.00, it is not only a bargain but will be an essential addition to everyone's Crosby library. This is, by far, the finest book ever written about Bing, and it is HIGHLY RECOMMENDED!


Giddins's study rescues Bing Crosby (in 1939) from a spate of mean-spirited bios.
Book of the week
Bing Crosby: A Pocketful of Dreams
by Gary Giddins

Revisions to the Book

By the way, Gary Giddins has said that there will be a paperback reissue of his book in a few years, and in anticipation of that he will welcome comments from ICC members and other Crosby fans about any errors or omissions that they find in the hardback edition. For example, it has already been pointed out to Gary that he mistakenly refers to Bing and Al Rinker's first recorded duet, "I've Got The Girl", as an acoustic recording on page 146, which of course it was not. Rather, it was made using the "Viva-tonal Electrical Process" of Columbia Records.

Another error which several ICC members have called to my attention is Gary's statement on page 551 that Bing's Decca recording of 'My Isle Of Golden Dreams" was never issued on LP. In fact, this song, which Bing referred to as one of his favorite recordings for Decca, did appear on the 12-inch Decca LP album DL-8268 entitled "Drifting and Dreaming."

As a fellow ICC member, Gary Giddins reviews each issue of BING carefully, and he used several articles from our magazine as sources for different aspects of his book. So anyone who has further corrections or suggestions for Gary are encouraged to send them to me, and I will see to it that they are forwarded to Gary for his consideration.

BING ON TELEVISION AT CHRISTMAS

The holiday season also provided the always-anticipated and ever-appreciated rebroadcasts of Bing's perennial film favorites, both on national cable channels and on many local television stations, with "Going My Way", "The Bells Of St. Mary's", "Holiday Inn" and "White Christmas" being the most frequently seen, as usual.

Also, as a welcome surprise, the BRAVO cable channel finally got around to televising the biographical program about Bing's life and career that was originally produced in London in December 1999, and is referred to by our British members as the "South Bank Show". See BING #124 for extensive coverage of background stories about the production of this television program. Broadcast as part of the BRAVO channel's series of "Profiles" of major entertainment figures, the show appeared twice on Christmas Eve, once on Christmas Day, and twice on December 26 (known as Boxing Day in Merrie old England), followed each time by the one hour compilation of highlights from Bing's Christmas TV specials that has appeared previously on television in the USA in recent years.

The *New York Daily News* previewed the BRAVO channel broadcast as follows:

> "HOLIDAY MUST: BRAVO Profiles Legendary Crooner Bing Crosby"
> "On Christmas Day, BRAVO will be broadcasting its original profile of Bing Crosby, followed by a program featuring clips from the crooner's 13 original Christmas specials. Narrated by Tony Roberts, the BRAVO profile is a welcome look at the singer's life and career. As producer Ken Barnes says: "Bing was the first voice with hormones". The profile mixes clips from Crosby's TV shows and films with a detailed review of his contributions to the music world. He's credited with revolutionizing the industry by recognizing the value of early videotape technology and recording his shows. (Comment: the reviewer should have said audio tape for Bing's radio shows, not videotape.) In one year, Crosby had 21 of the top 40 songs. "White Christmas", which he sang in the 1942 movie "Holiday Inn" has sold more than 30 million copies."

Despite several factual errors, this review was a welcome recommendation for the large New York area audience to watch a balanced and generally positive biographical program about Bing, which certainly is a rarity these days. We also were able to see the BRAVO program in the Washington, D.C. area as well, and it was a pleasure for me to watch it during this past holiday season. Congratulations to our British friends for a job well done.

"A POCKETFUL OF DREAMS"

ICC members who have been waiting for a decade for Gary Giddins' biography of Bing were finally rewarded in January, when the first volume of Gary's encyclopedic examination of Bing - the man and his music - was released to bookstores across the country by the publisher, Little, Brown and Company of New York City.

"A Pocketful Of Dreams" is more than worth the wait, even though it only takes Bing's life up to 1940, leading to a frequently asked question by reviewers and readers alike: "When can we expect the second volume?" I discussed this, and other questions with Gary Giddins before and after a nationwide book tour he made from mid-February through early March. Gary's answer was not for at least three more years. Gary is still conducting interviews around the country for part two, and he still has more research to complete before proceeding. I was hopeful that the second volume would be available by the time of the forthcoming Bing Crosby Conference at Hofstra University in November of 2002, but Gary told me that this will not be possible.

As those ICC members who have now read "A Pocketful Of Dreams" can attest, Gary Giddins is nothing if not a thorough and in-depth researcher and writer. It is clear from the 590 page body of the book, and the 70 page addendum citing sources and references, that Gary talked with literally everyone he could find who ever knew Bing, or knew anything about Bing, during the first 37 years of Bing's life. And Gary will take the same approach to volume two, so he has a great deal of work yet to do before it can be published.

The reviews of "A Pocketful Of Dreams" that have appeared in newspapers and magazines throughout the United States have been extensive and highly favorable - with one or two exceptions from critics who seemed to have private personal axes to grind - something that is not unusual in today's world. Overall, the publicity for Gary Giddins, his book, and Bing himself across the country has been extraordinary. We haven't seen anything like it since Bing's death, not even when "Going My Own Way" and "The Hollow Man" were dumped on the public years ago.

ICC members with access to the Internet can read the texts of many of the more significant reviews of Gary Giddins' book on Steven Lewis' Bing Crosby web site. However, just reading the texts does not begin to give a real picture of the positive impact of the actual articles in the newspapers and magazines themselves. Many publications have included full-page spreads with excellent (and often surprisingly unfamiliar) photographs of Bing from various stages of his career. Highlights of many of Bing's remarkable

SCENES FROM CHRISTMAS PAST

Because of the necessarily early editorial deadline for the annual Winter issue of BING it is not possible for me to give a complete report on all of the holiday events involving him that happen each year until the flowers of Spring are with us. So with a minor apology to the esteemed Mr. Dickens, here are the more memorable Crosby sightings from the year 2000 Christmas season in the United States.

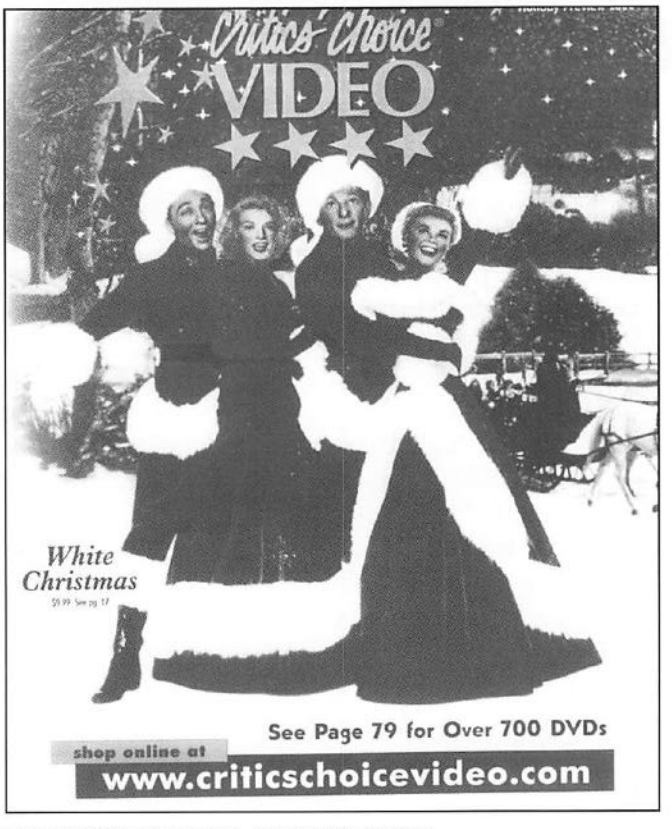
MAIL ORDER CROSBY

The two largest nationwide mail order catalog companies featured both Bing's compact discs and videos this past season. The Critics' Choice Video catalog had two different full color covers of Bing. Their November 2000 cover advertised "A Bing Crosby Christmas" on video and DVD, and this was followed by their December cover of Bing, Rosemary Clooney, Vera-Ellen and Danny Kaye in their "White Christmas" Santa costumes in honor of the release of their ever popular 1954 Paramount film on DVD this year. In addition, the Critics' Choice Music catalog for the holidays featured the new Christmas CD album by Bing and The Andrews Sisters which I compiled for MCA at the request of fellow ICC member Andy McKaie, with the following endorsement:

> "The Greatest Christmas Duets Of All Time
> It just ain't Christmas without Bing's dulcet tones in the background, and it just ain't a duet if it's not Bing with The Andrews Sisters, the single most successful pairing in pop history. So put together the best of each act's holiday recordings, both alone and together, on one low-priced CD and you have quite a holiday perennial."

The other major American mail order music catalog, Columbia House, recommended my other recent CD compilation for MCA of Bing's Academy Award songs as its "Selection of the Month" for gift giving during the holidays, with the following description:

> "Der Bingle was a true superstar, with his movies acting, in a way, as long form videos for such timeless hits as "White Christmas" , "Love In Bloom" and "Swinging On A Star". This special 20 track collection gathers up all of his Hollywood best: "Pennies From Heaven", "The Way You Look Tonight", "Ac-Cent-Chu-Ate The Positive", "Sweet Leilani" etc., including hard-to-find recordings of "Mona Lisa", "Secret Love" and "Never On Sunday"."



NEWSPAPER REVIEWS

Both the Washington Post and the New York Post included "A Merry Christmas With Bing Crosby and The Andrews Sisters", among their top CD recommendations for the holiday season, as did other newspapers across the country. The New York Post review, by their rock/pop expert, had the following rather amusing comments to make:

> "Most people who think of Bing Crosby and Christmas music these days think of the pipe-smoking crooner's now infamous duet with David Bowie on "Little Drummer Boy" (emphasis added). But during the '40s and '50s, the Bing was the voice of Ol' St. Nick and the master of Christmas music, along with Patty, Maxene and LaVerne - The Andrews Sisters.
>
> This newly gathered collection is very traditional old-time pop with big band swing arrangements. The single 20-song disc contains all six Christmas duets Crosby ever made with the Andrews Sisters as well as holiday solos from each. If you only listen to one track on this fine collection, check out "Santa Claus Is Comin' To Town" (Four Star Rating).

Comment: "...now infamous duet with David Bowie..."? Even though I appreciated the favorable review of the CD, where has this guy been for the last half century? Bing and Irving Berlin must, indeed, be spinning in their graves to learn that the modern generation can't identify Bing with the most popular recording of all time!

an absolutely hilarious parody of "Twas the Night before Christmas". His version was "twas the month after election", with jokes about Gore, Bush, ballots, chads, etc. He also did some stand up comedy, with a string of mother in law jokes, and spent a good 15 minutes answering audience questions from cards that were left in the lobby (get there early- maybe you can fill one out and ask him about Bing!). Someone asked him if his hair was his own!! He was on for over 90 minutes of the two hour show. He had a vaudeville style juggler onstage when he left to change clothes (or as he said, to 'check the box office receipts'). This guy rode a unicycle while juggling rubber balls, flaming torches, and miniature swords. That was the one time those close seats didn't seem so great!!! I could just see a flaming torch landing in my lap!

It was a great show, that brought back the days when Christmas was REALLY special on TV, with Perry, Bing and Andy. I know you'll enjoy his show. You'll have to let me know some of the songs he sings. I'll bet he sings "Music to Watch Girls By"! Gordon Hooper sent me a video of a TV show from the BBC called "The Crooners", and it opens with Andy singing this on "Top of The Pops". I understand the song was a big hit in the UK, after it was used in a Fiat auto advert.

Greg Van Beek

Encouraged by Greg's comments, my wife and I went to see Andy in Manchester and here is my response to Greg.

Went to see Andy Williams last night (January 31) and was most impressed. He opened with a voice that was a little croaky which was not helped by the over amplified microphone. However his voice soon warmed up and the mike problem was corrected. The first half was mainly a look back at some of his early successes with a film extract from *I'd Rather Be Rich* being a nice touch. After watching Andy sing the song 'Almost There' straight from the film, we then saw a digitally enhanced version with the Andy of today superimposed alongside his younger 1964 version.

He took a break after about 45 minutes introducing John and Cathy Taylor, some dancers with some different touches. Andy struggled to remember their names but the pianist fed the names to him with a stage whisper. Again, he said he was going to check the box office receipts.

I assume that the TV screen on the floor at the front in the middle of the stage was a teleprompter because Andy seemed to look at it a lot. The second half contained some newer songs and Andy had changed into his red ensemble for this. He also sang some of his old hits and after a standing ovation he returned to close with 'Danny Boy' and a few lines of 'May Each Day'.

A great night. What a professional! Memorable. Our local paper carried a complimentary review:

. . . But, at 73, he's still got bags of savvy. The voice, though perhaps a little shakier in the upper register, remains astonishingly smooth and melodic.

An old pro like Williams knows exactly what his audience wants, and he did all the hits, from the Elvis Presley-ish Butterfly (a chart-topper back in 1957) to the 1974 Neil Sedaka song Solitaire, a particular highlight.

Some songs (Godfather Theme, Love Story, MacArthur Park) he performed with soaring brilliance and impeccable phrasing. As the evening progressed, the years just seemed to fall away and the famous Williams voice grew in confidence and stature. By the end, the Bridgewater crowd were ecstatic and he thoroughly deserved his standing ovation.

Malcolm Macfarlane

Further authority for broadcast not required;
all talent, music, and copyrights cleared.
American Cancer Society
1955 Radio Material
"ALL STAR REVUE"
Platter No. 5
Side A
The Bing Crosby Show
Guests: Frank Sinatra, Rosemary Clooney,
Gary Crosby, Lindsay Crosby, John Scott Trotter
and his Orchestra and Ken Carpenter
Important: See enclosed instruction sheet.
Time: 28:40 - Theme fill for open end to 29:30
Part 1
type LAT.
speed 33
Play Outside In
87243 A

Treasury Department
U. S. SAVINGS BONDS DIVISION
Radio-Recording
FS-ABC-SB-371
D-51137
Announ. Ends 14:24
Theme Ends 14:34
E.T. ANNOUNCEMENTS INCLUDED
No. 143
Do Not Play Before December 18, 1949
"GUEST STAR"
BING CROSBY AND BOB HOPE
with John Conte and Harry Sosnik
and the Savings Bonds Orchestra
PROPERTY OF THE U. S. TREASURY DEPARTMENT
This transcription is to be used only as directed by the
Radio Section of the U. S. Savings Bonds Division.
Use or reproduction for private or commercial
purposes, in whole or in part, is prohibited.
GPO 16—55276-1
Allied Record Manufacturing Co., Inc.
Hollywood 38, Calif.

chance to loot my cabin of all my valuables. I have lost all my jewellery (some of it belonging to my mother and sister - long dead), camera, binoculars and gifts I had bought in America to bring home.

I am feeling much better now and the wounds have healed well. I still get bad dreams sometimes and on Sunday night when Sussex was hit by high winds, I got very nervous that the windows would break - which isn't like me usually.

The first week of the cruise crossing to New York was very enjoyable - I found a lady of my age who was also a great jazz enthusiast (very fond of Bix Beiderbecke) so we talked Bing a lot! I always like being in America (this is about my 10th. visit) so I had some very good times as well as bad.

Thank you again for your kind wishes,
Pat (Battered but unbowed!)

What a dreadful experience! Our best wishes go to Pat for her continued recovery.

DREAMY CLOONEY IN TUNE WITH THE HOLIDAYS

This was the heading to a review by Chip Deffaa in the New York Post of November 29 last of Rosemary Clooney's appearance at *Feinstein's at the Regency*.

FOR many cabaret buffs, the classic film musical "White Christmas" - starring Rosemary Clooney, Bing Crosby, Danny Kaye and Vera-Ellen - has been a part of our lives seemingly forever. So when Clooney begins showing movie clips during her act at the nightclub Feinstein's, it feels like the best of all possible ways to start the holiday season. She chats with us about the making of that film in her wry, unpretentious way - as if we were guests in her home. And when she finally begins singing the numbers Irving Berlin wrote for her and Crosby, the emotional impact is powerful. The performance takes on a near-iconic quality.

With the ineffable mixture of warmth, tenderness and rue that's hers alone, Clooney shares her solo feature from the film, "Love, You Didn't Do Right By Me." And then a number that both she and Crosby got to sing in the film, "Count Your Blessings." By the time she wraps things up with "White Christmas," the sentiment in the room could not be deeper. She gets a standing ovation, and wisely resists any temptation to do an encore. What could possibly follow?

The set begins with pleasant, perfunctory readings of such superficial seasonal standards as "Let It Snow," "It's Beginning to Look a Lot Like Christmas" and "Santa Claus Is Coming to Town." Clooney's ad-libs between the songs are more interesting than the songs. Guest pianist John Bayless' renditions of themes by Rachmaninoff, John Williams and others feel like an intrusion in the middle of Clooney's show. But if they give Clooney a chance to catch her breath, we can't complain.

Chip Deffaa

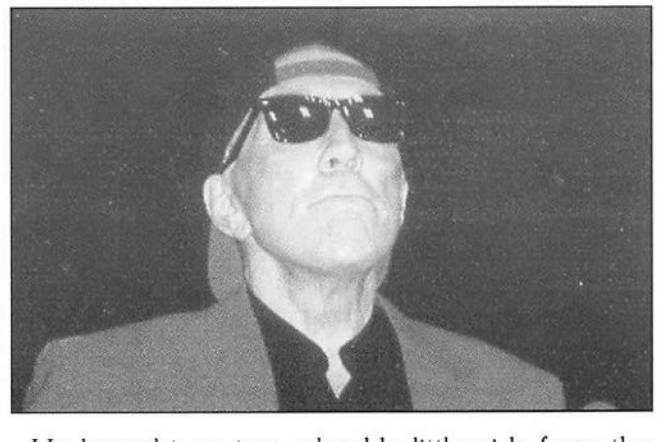
Andy Williams

Another artist from Bing's era who has been touring recently is Andy Williams. Greg Van Beek caught him before Christmas in the States and I saw him in Manchester in January. First, here's what Greg had to say in his e-mail to me.

Andy was in GREAT voice when I saw him December 14, as good as ever I'd say. Amazing when you consider he's 73, and just recovered from losing his voice completely last year (1999). He had the same problem Bing had in 1932 or 33 with the "nodes". Andy's doctor (and Julie Andrews) advised him against the surgery. Julie had it done, and has lost her beautiful singing voice for good as a result.

This was an all-Christmas music show, but Andy did close the show singing "Moon River" and "May Each Day", his closing theme from his TV variety show of the 1960's. I'm sure he does the same at his "regular" concerts. He also sang one called "Words", which I'd never heard. It is based on a classical piece, and was just beautiful.

We were very fortunate with the seats we obtained (just by purchasing tickets the conventional way, not through a "scalper" or anything), since the show was a sell-out. We were seated in the front row (center stage) of the orchestra pit (which was not used, since Andy's orchestra was onstage). We were eye level with the floor of the stage - I literally could've reached forward and grabbed him by the ankles! One of the attached photos shows him as a "rap" artist - he sang "It's the Holiday Season" as a "rap"- complete with a "crotch grab" at the end!!



He brought up two adorable little girls from the audience and sang "Frosty", "Rudolph" and "Do You Hear What I Hear" to them, and then told them

On The 'Road' with Hope and Crosby

Last November, the USA Today magazine carried a long article by Wes Gehring, a professor of film at Ball State University, Muncie, Indiana, which started as follows:
Through seven audience-pleasing films, Bob Hope and Bing Crosby made parody a staple of movie comedies.

THIS YEAR commemorates the 60th anniversary of the first Bob Hope and Bing Crosby "Road" picture -"Road to Singapore" (1940). During the next 22 years, the six additional instalments of the series: "Road to Zanzibar" (1941), "Road to Morocco" (1942), "Road to Utopia" (1945), "Road to Rio" (1947), "Road to Bali" (1952), and "Road to Hong Kong" (1962), made the Road pictures what is regarded as the most acclaimed comedy series in the history of American motion pictures.

Besides being the ultimate spoof of the action adventure genre, the Road pictures are a parody of Hollywood itself. As one might assume, given the celebrated nature of the series, the magic of this parody was immediately recognized. In 1940, the Hollywood Reporter was probably the most perceptive in its praise of "Road to Singapore": "in pairing Bing Crosby and Bob Hope, Paramount has created one of the greatest comedy teams in film history ... a demand for more of the same is an unqualified certainty."

The immediate critical and commercial success of the pictures was not lost on Hope, who used them as one more topic in his 1940s stand-up patter on stage and for radio. The subject also surfaced in the first of his numerous self-deprecatingly comic autobiographies, *They Got Me Covered* (1941): "I don't know what will happen in our next picture ... the 'Road to Morocco' but anyway, (perpetual Road love interest Dorothy Lamour), Bing, and I are having a lot of fun ... besides I'm getting a salary for my performance in these 'Road' pictures ... which, as one critic pointed out, is a perfect example of highway robbery."

That critic notwithstanding, the Road pictures helped bring an "A" film coolness to a genre (parody) which was often less than respected by the arbiters of cinema taste. Thus, in no time at all, America's favorite sometime team of Hope and Crosby had entertainingly mapped out what are still the same eight fundamental parameters of parody.

●●●●●

There then follows a long dissertation on the various parameters of parody which are apparently:

1. The spoof
2. "Creative criticism" (i.e. to create effective parody, one must be thoroughly versed in the subject being spoofed)
3. No confusion with satire
4. Continuation of the 'broad parody' tradition established in silent films
5. Not limited to one period and place
6. The loosest of storylines
7. Parody compounding (or comic peppering of other genres)
8. A self-conscious awareness of the moviemaking experience

As you will have realised, it is a very learned article with examples from the 'Road' films quoted to illustrate the divisions of the parody genre. Unfortunately space does not allow us to reproduce all of this but it is very encouraging to see such earnest deliberations in a major newspaper about Bing and Bob's exploits.

A Nice Cruise Home!

John Bignell alerted us to a horrific experience suffered by our long-time member, Pat Forster of Midhurst, West Sussex. Returning from New York on the S. S. Oriana, they were hit by a freak wave and Pat's outside cabin was the worst affected. The window shattered and water flooded in. Pat suffered some injuries and Michael Crampton sent her a get well message on behalf of the club. Pat soon replied as follows:

Thank you very much for your letter, it was so very kind of you to think of me.

I must say that at the age of 81 it was an experience I could have done without! I was lying on my bed having a quiet after-lunch read before going to a piano recital of Beethoven (another of my musical likes) when the large picture window behind me fell on top of me, followed by half of the Atlantic Ocean!!

I managed to get from under the wreckage but the cabin was flooded by about 2 ft. of water and this stopped me from getting the door open. Two men managed to get it open wide enough to drag me through the gap however.

I had glass embedded in my right foot and cuts to the other foot and my left arm. What saved me from worse, I think, was because I was lying down. Had I been standing I would have been cut to ribbons and perhaps swept out of the open gap where the window had been!

Perhaps one of the worst aspects of this episode is that while I was in the ship's hospital, the men responsible for dealing with the wrecked cabin took the

INTERNATIONAL CROSBY CIRCLE
INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR 12 MONTHS TO 31st DECEMBER 2000

Income	£	Expenditure	£
Subscriptions and donations	9085	Production of BING magazine (Covers 4 issues and includes additional postage, packing and consumables)	10590
Sales - "And Here's Bing!"	4262	"And Here's Bing!" costs	5352
Sales - Calendars	1197	Calendar	1555
Sales - CDs	567	Editorial costs	199
Sales - Books	134	Jonzo CDs	243
Sales - Back Issues	39	AGM costs	234
AGM - Raffle	71	Publicity	170
Bank Interest 2000	38	Internet Fee	106
		Books	75
Balance 31/12/1999	7481	Balance 31/12/2000	4350
	22874		22874

Notes:

1. The expenditure and income for the 2001 calendar will be shown in the 2001 accounts.
2. The accounts are a simple unaudited Income and Expenditure summary and amounts owing and stocks held are not shown. The club is able to cover its anticipated expenditure in 2001.

Michael Crampton. Secretary/Treasurer

TOP SONGS OF THE CENTURY

The list of the 365 top songs of the 20th. century, as recently selected by the National Endowment for the Arts and the Recording Industry Association of America starts as follows:

1. Over the Rainbow - Judy Garland
2. White Christmas - Bing Crosby
3. This Land Is Your Land - Woody Guthrie
4. Respect - Aretha Franklin
5. American Pie - Don McLean
6. Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy - The Andrews Sisters
7. West Side Story - Original Cast
8. Take Me Out to the Ball Game - Billy Murray
9. You've Lost That Lovin' Feelin' - The Righteous Brothers
10. The Entertainer - Scott Joplin

We don't normally have much time for these types of poll but we thought we ought to include this as Bing is at number two. There are several surprising choices! The songs were judged on historical significance as well as quality. "Over The Rainbow" was a hit in 1939 but did not hit the charts again after that. Glenn Miller had a number one with it, Bob Crosby reached number two with his version and Judy Garland's record reached only number five. Do we need to quote Bing's "White Christmas" statistics? The Beatles, Elvis Presley and Frank Sinatra do not make the top 20 in the poll. Make of it what you will.

Another poll which was published last November produced the following:

> "Slade's 1973 hit *Merry Xmas Everybody* - which has made regular reappearances in the charts since - was voted the most popular festive hit by 24% in the Amazon.co.uk survey. Runner-up was Bing Crosby's *White Christmas,* just 2% behind, followed by Wizzard's *I Wish It Could Be Christmas Every Day* on 15%."

Amusingly, *Merry Xmas Everybody* was also voted as the most annoying Christmas song by shoppers using Dixons' shops. Dixons decided not to use it any more in their stores and they replaced it with carols and more traditional songs such as Bing's "White Christmas."

As we go to press, voting is taking place in a BBC survey for the Voice of the 20th. Century. We have publicised this on the Internet and in correspondence in an effort to ensure that Bing makes a good showing.

Hitchcock, Jack Hobday, Ron Holder, Peter Howard, Frank Keogh, Robert Larkin, Sylvia Lawrence, Mr. A. Lee, Don Love, Gillian Marsh, Tom Matthews, Leslie Mills, Peter Monaghan, Thomas Mooney, Ian Patience, George Patmore, Arnold Pope, Norman Palmer, Christine Rice-Garwood, Mr. G. L. Robinson, Mr. H. C. Ross, Maggie Ryan, Tony Slaughter, Matthew Sprott, Mr. J. E. Stiles, John Tasker, Geoff Vizard, Trevor Wagstaff, Mr. P. A. J. West, Tom White and Stan Woodford.

All donations are gratefully received and they will help ensure that the ICC has yet another successful year.

DEATHS

Sadly I must inform our readers that the following members have recently died and we extend our sincere condolences to their families and friends.
Don Butler (Hamble le Rice, Hampshire), Mr. A. Curran (Liverpool), Arthur David Fisher (Billingham), Reg Gent (Stockport, Cheshire), Bill Huntington (Morecambe, Lancashire), Russell Mallon (Belfast), Geoffey Nicholson (West Sussex) and Harold Paul (Haslemere, Surrey),

Reg Gent's brother, Alan, informed the ICC that Reg died on the 17 January 2001 after a short illness. He told us of Reg's lifelong interest in Bing, his huge support for our annual calendar and that Reg enjoyed very much his membership of ICC.

Bill Huntington (age 82 years) was a great Crosby collector and friend of ICC member and near neighbour, John Weir. John has told us of their Crosby meetings when they became so enthralled with listening to Bing's recordings that Bill was often late for his dinner. Bill attended the John Joyce Gateshead meetings and he was a real Bing enthusiast and put together a vast collection over many years. Bill's other great interest was painting, a hobby that he pursued keenly after he retired from NORWEB as a commercial engineer and his original paintings were much sought after. Many of them were sold commercially as prints. Bill would also have prints made to include on his always admired Christmas cards.

Harold Paul was our oldest member and he died suddenly on 3 December 2000 having lived life to the full. Harold played first team rugby for Twickenham and we are not allowed to print some of the stories associated with his times there! He played squash until he was seventy-five and his love of motoring saw him driving his beloved Tigra sports car up until two months before he died. Harold was also sailor, chef, gardener and a great family man and he loved music with Bing being his favourite. He was proud of the ICC certificate presented to him by his son in law on the occasion of his 90th birthday. Harold was widowed in 1983 and leaves two daughters Susan and Judy.

2001 RENEWALS

At the time of writing around forty-five UK and Irish members still have to renew their membership of ICC and we do hope that the reminder they received will prompt a quick and positive response. Having to send out reminders is time consuming but worthwhile if members are jolted into continuing their valued membership of the club.

KATHRYN CROSBY WRITES

Kathryn has drawn our attention to three new books crafted by the Crosby family guide, Dr. M.W. Sullivan. Dr. Sullivan is a leading writer and educator and has been a family friend since Bing sought his guidance in furthering the Crosby children's education. Kathryn tells us that the three new novels by Dr. Sullivan are a trilogy and that he is a wise and a great writer. Kathryn is featured on the covers of the books and the family is mentioned within the pages of the novels.

Any member interested in obtaining the books should write or ring me. Cost will be thirty-five dollars for the three books.

BING CROSBY - A POCKETFUL OF DREAMS

This is a thoroughly absorbing, insightful and very detailed look at Bing's formative years and I am struck by the amount of exposure Bing had to debating, elocution and time spent gaining experience on stage. Bing served a very long apprenticeship and learnt many lessons along the way and this led ultimately to him becoming one of the most articulate performers ever.

This is a "must have" book for any enthusiast who wishes to discover more about Bing's incredible rise to fame and reviews have been detailed and mostly positive to date. Malcolm will have difficulty choosing which reviews to include and which to leave out of this issue of BING.

UK Members wishing to order the book can do so over the Internet at www.amazon.co.uk . If you don't have access to the Internet, please contact Malcolm Macfarlane and he will order it for you. The price (including postage) varies between £21 and £23 depending on the exchange rate on the day it is ordered.

Highly recommended.

Finally, can I draw members attention to the enclosed leaflet from HOFSTRA CULTURAL CENTER. All members are encouraged to return the form to indicate their interest in the conference and we look forward to seeing many of you during the days of 14, 15, and 16 November, 2002.

Until summer, my best wishes to all 1000 members.

Michael Crampton

SECRETARY / TREASURER'S REPORT

The year 2001 has got off to an excellent start for the International Crosby Circle with the news that our membership has passed 1000 for the first time in the club's history and incredibly we have several original members still with us to witness our continuing success. As Malcolm says, the Gary Giddins book, the continuing excellent Jonzo series and the impending Hofstra conference provide impetus for some successful and interesting years to come.

BING is our principal means of keeping in contact and I congratulate Malcolm on his industry in bringing us the finest and most interesting magazine of its kind. Congratulations too to Wig, Laura, Etty, David, Jim, Lionel, Ron, Keith and Bert for their indefatigable efforts on behalf of Bing and the ICC. Members have much for which to be grateful.

NEW MEMBERS

We extend a warm welcome to all of the following members who commenced their membership in the last year and we trust that they will derive enjoyment and interest from their membership of ICC. Wig and Laura Wiggins can take a bow once again as their recruitment efforts are outstanding.

AUSTRALIA

Ken Hopkins (Vic.), Hazel Nunn (NSW), Malcolm G. Smith (NSW) and Venny Barbagallo (NSW).

IRELAND

Gerard Manlon (Waterford)

ENGLAND

Mrs N. Gray and Mr. P. Jeffery of (Portsmouth), Bette Kent (Dartford), Ronald Makins (East Ham), Kit Manners (Herne Bay), Eric William Peacock (Liverpool), Mr. D. Penrose (Hull), Norman Palmer (South Stanley, Co. Durham), John Powers (Buxton, Derbys.) and Richard Pearson (Staines, Middlesex).

SCOTLAND

Gillian Kelly (Kilmarnock).

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA and CANADA

Robert Pinna (Brooklyn, New York), John Paterson (Mountain View, California), Bill Tannenbaum (Las Vegas, Nevada), William Franklin (Newport Beach, California), Lorne Haresen (Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada), Ruth Prigozy (New York), John Goldsmith (Greenville, Illinois), Jonathan Pytko (Scranton, Penn.), Larry Wood (Lansing, Michigan), Ed Loder (Allentown, Penn.), John Tierney (Chevy Chase, Maryland), Stan Hester (Milford, Michigan), Robert Petix (Scotch Plains, New Jersey), Paul Murphy (Lexington, Kentucky), Randall Shoemaker (Alexandria, Virginia), Laurie Mitchell (Fort Wayne, Indiana) and Angela Magee (Oakville, Ontario, Canada), Carol Sherland (Oley, Penn.), Mark Mitchell (Guelph, Ontario, Canada), Fred McBride (Scarborough, Ontario, Canada), Edmund Brandt (Chicago, Illinois), Chris Cavers (Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada), Harold Smith (Glendale, New York), Carmelia Amari (Brooklyn, New York), Rev. Eugene Roberts (Marlboro, New York), Tom Bertino (San Rafael, California), Martin Clark (Shelden, New York), Harold Archinal (Toluca Lake, California), Harold Dreyer (El Cerrito, California), Cody Morgan (Las Vegas, Nevada), Leonard Maltin (Toluca Lake, California), George De Lodzia (West Kingston, Rhode Island), Tony Toran (Lauderhill, Florida), Ordean Olson (Hollywood, Florida), David Siegel (Yorktown Heights, New York), John Woods (New York), Frank Rucano (Fort Montgomery, New York), Will Friedwald (New York), Walter Raubicheck (New York), Natalie Datlof (Hempstead, New York), Wayne Stankowski (Milwaukee, Wisconsin), Roy Johnson (San Francisco, California), Robert Griffin (Mattawan, Michigan), Robert Jenson (Azusa, California), Abe Frattis (Santa Ana, California), Abert Zientowski (Grosse Point Park, Michigan), Windy Ferguson (Martinsville, Virginia), Ernest Paul (Bayport, New York), Norman Wishner (Glenview, Illinois), Judith Balazentis (West Mifflin, Penn.), Robert Brown (Palos Verdes Estates, California), Alberto Albanese (Santa Monica, California), Joanne Their (Brooklyn, New York), and Michael Campbell (Livermore, California).

PLUS

KATHRYN CROSBY (Genoa, Nevada) - HONORARY

MARY CROSBY BRODKA (Malibu, California) - HONORARY

PAT BOONE (Los Angeles, California) - HONORARY

DONATIONS

Michael Collins, Roger Addey, Paul Hennessy, Tim Page, Donald Bostock, Jeremy Rose, Dave Spong, Brian Lewis and Mr. C. Hall have given exceptional gifts to the ICC this year and we are indebted for their generosity. They are joined in their magnanimity by the following generous members - Arthur Blood (from his stamp sales), George Adey, Ian Arnott, Michael Baxter, Maurice Beardsmore, John Bignell, Bert Bishop, Wag Bowerman, Yvonne Bowles, Frank Brannigan, Leslie Brice, Peter Carpenter, Ron Field, John Coomes, Bill Emery, Donald Flear, Brian Ford, Mr. R. E. Gould, Les Grassby, William Green, Joan Griffiths, Douglas Haywood, Kenneth Heason, Doug Hellier, Chris

EDITORIAL

It has been a most rewarding winter in terms of positive publicity for Bing. Much of this is due to the impact of the new book by Gary Giddins "Bing Crosby - A Pocketful of Dreams - The Early Years, 1903-1940". We carried a brief review of this in our last edition but this has been completely overshadowed by a plethora of learned and detailed appraisals from all of the top newspapers in the United States. Wig Wiggins mentions some of these and his article is followed by another batch of interesting and sometimes controversial comment. Some rare Crosby correspondence has turned up in connection with this and we give outline details. With sundry matters arising in connection with Gary's book, we could almost have re-titled this edition as GARY instead of BING!

Gary Giddins has done more than anyone to help overturn the negative images produced by first "The Hollow Man" and then by Gary Crosby's memoir. We owe him a huge debt of gratitude and I am sure I speak for you all when I say "Thanks, Gary." As a result of the book, the media coverage enjoyed in recent months has been the most productive since Bing's death and will hopefully encourage other Bing projects. The Hofstra event is on the horizon and planning is about to start for the centenary of Bing's birth on May 3, 2003. I have written to the President of Gonzaga University about the centenary as it would seem appropriate for a major celebration to take part there. It is vital that all of us embraced by the term "Crosbyana" work together to maximise the impact of the next two years.

I am writing a discussion "action" document which I will circulate in the next few weeks to all Crosby clubs, members of our management committee and other interested parties so that we can co-ordinate our efforts to bring Bing back to the notice of a wider audience. We stand on the brink of a very interesting couple of years and if we pull together, we should be able to "move mountains."

There is a "mountain" of reading for you in this issue and, as usual, several articles have had to be held back. To those early Editors of our club magazine, this situation would have been unbelievable but very welcome! Lionel Pairpoint is absent from this edition as he is working hard on his book detailing Bing's television work. My thanks to all of our contributors for their efforts.

The expanded version of my diary, which will be titled "Bing Crosby - Day by Day" should be in the hands of the publishers - Scarecrow Press - by the time you read this. Suffice to say at this stage, it is dramatically different and now runs to about

270,000 words on over 800 pages with many extracts from newspapers and books relating to the events chronicled. Further details will be supplied in due course.

Norman Wolfe's book "Troubadour" is complete and he is in negotiations with several agents regarding its eventual publication. Also Wig gives details of a forthcoming new discography in his article and Gary Hamann's latest publication is still available as will be seen from "Trading Post." CDs continue to come our way with the magnificent Jonzo series leading the way. It is surprising that our UK members do not support this series as much as those in the USA and certainly the latest CDs display Bing's voice arguably at its peak. The reproduction quality is excellent.

I had a holiday in Florida in February and met Gord and Elaine Atkinson, Norman Wolfe, and for the first time, Howard Levine. I'll write a brief article about Howard for the next issue as I am sure that members will be very interested in his Bing activities over the years.

Whilst in Florida, I popped into the library at Fort Myers (yes, Bing had been there in 1961) and checked my e-mails. There were 35 messages in all and I decided to deal with the replies when I got home. Unfortunately I did not mark the messages correctly and those I had read had disappeared when I got home. I have remembered most of them but there were others and my apologies to those who did not receive a response. Please write again if necessary.

Finally, you will read that Jim Reilly has been hospitalised for a while. As I write this, he is recovering well and may I pass on the good wishes of all members to him for a speedy return to good health.

Malcolm Macfarlane

CONTENTS

	Page Nos.
Editorial	4
Secretary / Treasurer's Report	5
Top Songs of the Century	7
On the 'Road' with Hope and Crosby	8
A Nice Cruise Home!	8
Dreamy Clooney in Tune with the Holidays	9
Andy Williams	9
Bing in the USA	11
Bing Crosby: A Pocketful of Dreams - The Early Years, 1903-1940	16
Bing Crosby, the Unsung King of Song	27
Gary Giddins: The True Life of a Crooner	29
The Crosby Letters	30
The Book Signings	31
Trading Post	34
Celluloid Crosby	36
The A - Z of Bing's Movies	37
Two Plus Fours	39
Digital Versatile Discs	40
Time Marches Back	41
One Sweet Letter From You	43
Flo's Kicker, The Picker, The Groaner and The Spokes	47
Once in a While	49
Bert Bishop's "Bing On the Box	50
Bing's Jingle Still Rings	55
Keeping Track	56
Walk on By	59

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USA and Canada	US $20 per annum
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All remittances should be sent in **£ sterling** payable to 'Michael Crampton - ICC' with the exception of (a) US and Canadian members who should send their remittances in US dollars to F. B. Wiggins (b) Australian and New Zealand members who should pay David Currington in Australian dollars (c) Mainland European members (not Eire) who should pay Etty Gits in £ sterling. For addresses see inside front cover.

Articles for inclusion in the magazine should be sent to the Magazine Editor.
Other Correspondence concerning membership, non-arrival of the magazine or other aspects of the club's affairs should be sent to the Hon. Secretary/Treasurer.

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THE INTERNATIONAL CROSBY CIRCLE

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(also http.//members.aol.com/macwilmslo/BING_magazine.html)

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